

B U L L E T I N

C O N T E N T S

Resolution on Negro Question.....J. R. Johnson

Supplement to Politican Reso-
lution on Trade Union Act-
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The Historical Development of the Negroes in American Society

The history of the Negro question and the American revolutionary movement in general, and the Trotskyist movement in particular, makes it imperative at this stage to outline in however brief a form the role of the Negroes in the political development of American society.

In 1776 the masses of the Negroes played no initiatory role and the revolution would have taken the general course it did if not one single Negro lived in the United States. However, as soon as the actual revolutionary struggle began, the Negroes compelled the revolutionary bourgeoisie to include the rights of Negroes among the rights of man. The Negroes themselves played a powerful part in the military struggle of the revolution.

Between 1800 and 1830 the Negroes, disappointed in the results of the revolution, staged a continuous series of revolts. By 1831 the petty-bourgeois democracy of the United States entered upon a period of widespread egalitarianism and humanitarian agitation. Disappointed by their failures between 1800 and 1830, the Negro slaves in the South, aided by free Negroes in the North, sought their freedom by mass flight. Owing to this spontaneous action, the pettybourgeois movement for the rights of the common man was soon dominated by the struggle for the abolition of slavery. The link between the Northern bourgeoisie and the Southern planters was far stronger by 1860 than the link between the colonial bourgeoisie and the British in 1776. The Northern bourgeoisie used all possible means to avoid the revolutionary clash. The most powerful subjective influence which forced the irrepressibility of the conflict upon the consciousness of the people was the agitation of the petty-bourgeoisie stimulated, maintained and intensified over the years by the refusal of the masses of slaves to accept their position. In the course of the Civil War the revolutionary actions of the masses of the Negroes in the South played a decisive role in the winning of the Northern victory.

In the Populist movement of the '60s in the South the Negro farmers and semi-proletarians, independently organized to the extent of a million and a quarter in the National Colored Farmers Alliance, were a militant and powerful wing of the Populist movement. They supported the break with the Republican Party and the formation of a Third Party with social as well as economic aims.

The importance of the Negroes as a revolutionary force has grown with the development of the American economy. Conversely, however, racial prejudice against the Negroes has also grown. Between 1830 and 1860 the Southern planters cultivated the theory of Negro inferiority to a degree far exceeding that of earlier revolutionary days, being driven to do this by the increasing divergences between the developing bourgeois democracy in the United States and the needs of the slave economy. To conquer the formidable threat of white and Negro unity represented by Populism, the Southern plantocracy elevated race consciousness to the position of a principle. The whole country was injected with this idea. Thus, side by side with his increasing integration into production which becomes more and more a social process, the Negro becomes more than ever conscious of his exclusion from democratic privileges as a separate racial group in the community.

At the same time in the country as a whole, as in the world at large, the rights of democracy^{be} come more and more a burning political question in view of the widespread attack of declining bourgeois society upon the principles of democracy in general. Simultaneously, the rise of the labor movement brings increasing consciousness of labor as a social force in the reorganization of society. Thus the Negro in his century and a half old struggle for democratic rights is increasingly confronted with the subjective consciousness of himself as an oppressed racial minority and the objective consciousness of labor as the great bulwark of democracy in the country at large.

It is in the light of this contradiction that we must trace the development among Negroes of the sense of nationalistic oppression and the modern efforts to free themselves from it.

Negro Nationalism: first phase

The first reaction of the masses of the Negroes to the consolidation of the Solid South was the policy of Booker T. Washington, who counselled submission, industrial training, and the development of Negro business. For the moment the Negroes in the South seemed to acquiesce. But in reality there grew up a furious but suppressed hatred of whites at the oppression and particularly at the racial humiliation to which Negroes were now being subjected. The appreciation of this is fundamental to any understanding of the Negro question.

During World War I the needs of Northern industry brought a million Negroes to the North. The suppressed resentment burst out and was organized and misled as Garveyism. Thus this essentially nationalistic explosion took place immediately the Negroes gained some integration into American society which allowed them free expression. Its real significance was the indication that it gave of the powerful force of social protest which smouldered in the hearts of Negroes.

The Negro and Organized Labor

The Negroes due to their place as the most oppressed section of the labor force and their sense of national oppression have always shown themselves on the whole exceptionally ready to join the forces of organized labor. The exclusion of Negroes from the AF of L corresponded to a period of class collaboration practised by the AF of L leadership. When the I.W.W. raised the banner of militant trade unionism among the most oppressed and exploited sections of the working population Negro labor responded both as rank and filers and as good organizers. Moreover, the I.W.W. gave the Negroes the sense of a social program for the regeneration of society to which the Negroes have always responded.

In 1932 the Negroes, like the rest of the labor movement, followed the New Deal program with its vast promises of a new order in America. But the Roosevelt government, while of necessity including the Negroes in its social service program for the unemployed, did nothing to implement its vague promises for the amelioration of the national oppression of Negroes in the country.

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The C.I.O., being mainly an organization of the heavy industries, was compelled to organize the Negroes in great industries like steel and auto or face the impossibility of any organization at all. The Negro masses with some hesitation responded magnificently and today they are one of the most progressive groups in the various unions which constitute the C.I.O.

This entry into the militant trade union movement is undoubtedly of great significance not only for organized labor as a whole but for the Negro people. Yet the main struggle of the Negro masses in the United States has been and until the achievement of socialism will continue to be their struggle for their democratic rights as a nationally oppressed minority. Their entry into the ranks of organized labor does not lessen their sense of national oppression. On the contrary, it increases it and in full accordance with their role in past American revolutionary crisis and the developing antagonisms of American society, this independent action of the Negro masses is already playing a role in relation to the American proletariat which constitutes one of the most important elements in the struggle for socialism.

Negro Nationalism: second phase

The tumultuous world situation, the loud-voiced shrieking of democracy by Anglo-American imperialism and the increasing demands of organized labor in America for greater and greater extension of its democratic rights created in the Negro people by the beginning of World War I an intensive desire to struggle for equality. Driven by the necessities of war, the Roosevelt government called upon the people of America to make the great sacrifices necessary for war in the name of democracy. At the same time, however, the special needs and practices of Southern society and industry as a whole, fortified by the now deeply-ingrained race prejudice of American society, prohibited any extension of democracy to the Negro people. Instead the persecution and discrimination of World War I have been intensified. The violent attacks and humiliations to which the Negro people have been subjected, in the Army in particular, have raised the indignation of the Negro masses to a high pitch.

The Negroes have responded with a nation-wide offensive. This offensive, while specially concerned with the right of entry into industry and also into Jim Crow unions has expressed itself not only in mass movements but in a growing determination to struggle in an individual and often terroristic manner against any manifestation of white superiority. The younger Negroes in particular now walk the streets in many towns determined to assert themselves. And in states like Virginia, the Carolinas, and Tennessee their attitude in street-cars, their resentful submission to the old Jim-Crow laws have created a degree of social tension unknown in those parts for two generations. This has been one of the main contributing causes to the series of racial outbreaks which have taken place in various parts of the country. The Attorney-General of the United States has made the fantastic and unprecedented proposal to prohibit the Negroes from coming into Northern cities and has publicly expressed his fears of imminent race riots. He thus typifies the bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie in the face of the mass offensive of the Negroes.

The character and high stage of development of the nation-wide Negro offensive is best typified by its expression in Harlem. Harlem is the largest urban concentration of Negroes in the country. It is the area in which Negroes feel safest, freest and therefore most able to express their resentment. It is therefore precisely in Harlem that appear most powerfully the nationalistic sentiments of the Negro and the deepest social protests. In 1935 the Negroes in Harlem carried out a spontaneous demonstration against their general social conditions and particularly against the non-employment of Negroes in Harlem stores. The demonstration initiated a movement which has made substantial corrections of this injustice. In 1941 the Harlem community organized and carried to success a demonstration against the non-employment of bus drivers. Similar actions or attempts at action have taken place all over the country, except in the very deep South.

The Negroes have not been satisfied with local or merely regional demonstrations. Highly significant is the organized expression of their boiling resentment. As far back as 1940, Councilman Powell, realizing the need for giving some national organized expression to this widespread resentment, tried to summon a national conference of Negro leaders in New York. The movement did not materialize, but by 1941 the pressure of the Negro masses had forced the formation of an organization aimed at Marching on Washington and making a forcible protest to the state against the national oppression of the Negroes.

The Negro petty-bourgeoisie leaders found their organizations of the NAACP and the Urban League rejected by the Negro masses as unsuitable for their militant purposes. They trembled before this powerful urge of the Negro masses to confront the capitalist state with a comprehensive protest, against their grievances. In the persons of Randolph and White they rushed to head the movement and immediately turned it over to the Roosevelt Government which transformed itself into leader of the Negro people under the guise of the FEPC. The Negro masses waited patiently upon the FEPC to solve their problems in industry and upon the capitalist state to improve the situation of Negroes in the Army. With the failure of the Roosevelt Government and the FEPC to ameliorate their grievances, the masses of the Negro people arrived at the decision that they must take matters into their own hands. The most outstanding expression of this sentiment was the Harlem demonstration, participated in by many thousands of people, viewed sympathetically by the large majority of the people of Harlem and Negroes all over the United States. When examined in its totality it will be seen as one of the most significant manifestations of independent social protest among Negroes that has taken place since the Garvey movement. This is no question merely of bad housing, insufficient playgrounds or increasing poverty.

The Harlem demonstration, like the miners strike, represent a significant stage in the development of the struggle against capitalist society. The miners strike was an indication not only of the immediate grievances of the miners but of the stage of development reached by the American proletariat as a whole. The miners did what millions of Americans wanted to do. The Harlem action is equally an indication of the sentiments of the great majority of Negroes in this country. Both of these manifestations in their strength and in their weaknesses are the two most important indications of the developing mass resentment against the existing, i.e., the capitalist, society that have resulted from the strain of the war.

At the same time the petty-bourgeois leaders among the Negroes have issued a political manifesto which, despite all its weaknesses, show that the Negro people as a whole have reached the stage of taking a critical attitude, as Negroes, to both the Democratic and Republican parties. Both the Negroes protesting in the streets and the timid and vacillating pettybourgeois have now reached a stage in their evolution where, as always in their past history, their next historic step is towards unity with the revolutionary class, in our day, the American proletariat. This rapid development of the Negro people during the last few years poses exceptional problems and exceptional opportunities for the American proletariat and therefore for the revolutionary party.

The American Proletariat and the Negro Question Today

The American proletariat is the class whose objective role at the present stage is to solve the fundamental problems of American society. Any theoretical analysis of the contemporary Negro problem must therefore begin with the developing relation of the Negro struggle to the general struggles of the proletariat as the leader of the oppressed classes in American society.

i. In the present stage of American capitalism the great danger threatening the masses of the people is Fascism. Events in Detroit and elsewhere have shown that the fascistic elements will exploit to the limit the Negro problem in the United States to confuse, disorganize and divide the great masses of the people and to disrupt their natural leader in the struggle against Fascism, the organized force of labor.

ii. The American bourgeoisie, whether Democratic or Republican, is perfectly aware of the permanent nature of the agricultural crisis and has already shown its determination to bribe the farmers to support it against organized labor. However, the problems of the poor farmers, the tenant farmers, the sharecroppers and the agricultural proletariat are insoluble in capitalist society. The solution of the agrarian problem in the United States rests with the proletariat and any solution involves automatically the general social situation of millions of Negroes in the Southern states.

iii. The South presents the gravest problem of democracy in the United States. Economic remains of slavery, a large landless peasantry, the development of large-scale and, especially, the extractive industries, the transference of textile industry from the North, a developing labor movement - all these are permeated with a caste system comparable to nothing else in the modern world. Holding together these diverse and contradictory elements is a political superstructure with the external forms of bourgeois democracy. This extraordinary conglomeration of explosive forces is situated not as in India, thousands of miles away from the metropolis, but in the very heart of the most advanced political bourgeois democracy in the world.

Armed with Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution, which we must apply at home as well as abroad, the Bolshevik Party must be able to foresee the telescoping of the industrial, agricultural and social revolution in the South. These contradictions are developing at a time when Fascism, the enemy of democracy and the most outspoken of all proponents of racial domination is experiencing signal defeats administered

at the cost of great sacrifices to the American people. Already this gigantic hypocrisy has made deep penetration into the minds of Negroes in the South. Familiarity with that situation and the comparative acceptance by the masses, particularly the Negro masses, in the past, should not dull our comprehension of the potential dynamite which it represents.

It is possible that before the general economic and political forces in the South have reached the point of explosion, the Negro masses may by independent mass actions pose all questions purely in terms of equality of Negro rights. Whatever the pace of the general development or the forms that it may take, we must expect that in the course of the next period, the period of the social crisis in America, the American proletariat as a whole will be faced with this problem.

iv. Even today, in the day to day struggles for democratic rights, the Southern landlords and industrialists have proved themselves the unyielding enemies, not only of the working class but of the democratic rights of the whole American people. Large sections of American society, particularly organized labor and the great numbers of Negroes in the North are now fully aware of this and are aware also that the basis of Southern political power is the economic and social degradation of the Negroes in the South.

From the above four points, certain conclusions of extreme importance to the American proletariat can be drawn. In America as in every other country, the basic struggle is between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie for the control of the economic sources of social and political power. But in every country this struggle assumes special historical forms. It is the task of the revolutionary party first of all to clarify itself in order to be able to clarify the proletariat on the crucial role of the Negro problem in the defense of its own position and the socialist reconstruction of American society.

The Negro Question as a National Question

The 14 million Negroes of the United States are subjected to every conceivable variety of economic oppression and social and political discrimination. These tortures are to a large degree sanctified by law and practiced without shame by all the organs of government. The Negroes, however, are and have been for many centuries in every sense of the word, Americans. They are not separated from their oppressors by differences of culture, difference of religion, difference of language, as the inhabitants of India or Africa. They are not even regionally separated from the rest of the community as national groups in Russia, Spain or Yugoslavia.

The Negroes are for the most part proletarian or semi-proletarian and therefore the struggle of the Negroes is fundamentally a class question.

The Negroes do not constitute a nation, but, owing to their special situation, the difference in color from the rest of the community, their problem becomes the problem of a national minority. The Negro question is a part of the national and not of the "national" question. This national minority is most easily distinguishable from the rest of the community by its racial characteristics. Thus the Negro question is a question of race and not of "race."

7. The contrast between their situation and the privileges enjoyed by those around them have always made the Negroes that section of American society most receptive to revolutionary ideas and radical solution of social problems. The white working class struggles against the objective rule of capital and for some subjective goal, which even on the very eve of revolution, is impossible to visualize in concrete and positive terms. The Negroes, on the other hand, struggle and will continue to struggle objectively against capital, but in contrast to the white workers, for the very concrete objective democratic rights that they see around them.

But the whole history of the United States and the role of the Negroes in American economy and society are a constant proof and reminder of the fact that it is absolutely impossible for the Negroes to gain equality under American capitalism.

Such is the development of American capitalist society and the role of Negroes in it that the Negroes struggle for democratic rights brings the Negroes almost immediately face to face with capital and the state. The Marxist support of the Negro struggle for democratic rights is not a concession that Marxists make to the Negroes. In the United States today this struggle is a direct part of the struggle for socialism.

National Struggles and the Struggle for Socialism

All serious problems arising from the Negro question revolve around the relationship of the independent mass actions of the Negroes for democratic rights to the working class struggle for socialism.

In the 2nd Congress of the Communist International, Lenin's theses singled out as examples of the national and colonial question the Irish question and the question of the Negroes in America. This Leninist approach was based upon close study of the economic situation of the Negroes in the United States and the Irish Rebellion in 1916. The whole historical development of the Negro struggle in the United States and its relations to the social struggles of the revolutionary classes show that the Leninist definition of the Negro question as part of the national question is the correct method with which to approach this problem. It is necessary, therefore, to have a precise and clear conception of the application of this method. The most concentrated example of it is Lenin's treatment of the Irish Rebellion during World War I.

Lenin wishes to illustrate the specifically nationalist struggle of the Irish Rebellion in its relation to the socialist struggle of the British proletariat against British imperialism. He uses the experience of the Russian Revolution in 1905 which took place exclusively within the national boundaries of Russia. He uses also, not the struggles of the nationally oppressed minorities, but the struggles of the petty-bourgeoisie, the peasants and other non-proletarian, non-class conscious groups, in relation to the struggle of the Russian proletariat. We have therefore a very concrete illustration of the applicability of the method to environments and classes superficially diverse but organically similar.

(a) "The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois-democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which all the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these were masses imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vaguest and most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. Objectively, the mass movement broke the back of tsarism and paved the way for democracy; for that reason the class conscious workers led it. "

Within the United States the socialist revolution will ultimately consist of a series of battles in which the discontented classes, groups and elements of all types will participate in their own way and form a contributory force to the great culminating struggles which will be led by the proletariat.

(b) "The socialist revolution in Europe cannot be anything else than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry of the oppressed and discontented elements. Sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will inevitably participated in it -- without such participation, mass struggle is impossible, without it no revolution is possible -- and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But objectively they will attack capital, and the class conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat expressing this objective truth of a heterogeneous and discordant, motly and outwardly incohesive, mass struggle will be able to unite and direct it, to capture power, to seize the banks, to expropriate the trusts, hated by all, though for different reasons..."

In the United States social revolution is impossible without the independent mass struggles of the Negroes, whatever the prejudices, the reactionary fantasies, the weaknesses and errors of these struggles. The proletarian composition of the Negro people and the developing labor movement offer great opportunities for a continuous reduction of the prejudices of the Negro people.

(c) "The struggle of the oppressed nations in Europe, a struggle capable of going to the lengths of insurrection and street fighting, of breaking down the iron discipline in the army and martial law, will 'sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe' infinitely more than a much more developed rebellion in a remote colony. A blow delivered against the English imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more significant politically than a blow of equal weight delivered in Asia or Africa."

Blows delivered by an oppressed national minority so entangled in the social structure of the United States as the Negroes, possess a political significance of greater importance in this country than a blow delivered by

any other section of the population except the organized proletariat itself.

(d) "The dialectics of history is such that small nations, powerless as an independent factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the real power against imperialism to come on the scene, namely, the socialist proletariat."

Within the United States, the Negroes are undoubtedly powerless to achieve their complete or even substantial emancipation as an independent factor in the struggle against American capital. But such is the historic role of the Negroes in the United States; such today is their proletarian composition and such is their interrelation with the American proletariat itself that their independent struggles form perhaps the most powerful stimulus in American society to the recognition by the socialist proletariat of its real responsibilities to the national development as a whole and its power against American imperialism.

The ideal situation is that the struggle of the minority group should be organized and led by the proletariat. But to make this a precondition of supporting the struggle of non-proletarian, semi-proletarian or non-class conscious groups is a repudiation of all Marxist theory and practice. Thus it is utterly false to draw the conclusion that the independent struggle of the Negro masses for their democratic rights is to be looked upon merely as a preliminary stage to a recognition by the Negroes that the real struggle is the struggle for socialism.

The Marxist Movement and the Negro Question

The Marxist movement in the United States with little exception has failed to grasp the fact that the Negro question is part of the national question. This is not surprising because it has shown little interest in the Negroes except under the direct and insistent stimulus of the internationalist movement.

The socialist movement under Debs considered any special appeal to the Negro people as contrary to the spirit of socialism. Randolph appealed to Negroes to become socialists but proved quite incapable of dealing with the powerful nationalistic current of Garveyism that was prevalent at the time. The Communist Party up to 1928 was unable to understand either the significance of the Negro question in the U.S. or the method of work required. It was only through the drastic intervention of the C.I., whatever its purpose, that the Communist Party in 1929 began a serious approach to the Negro question. Despite many exaggerations, the turn to the Negro question was on the whole sound and effective, but it was seriously handicapped by the adoption of a policy of advocating self-determination for the Black Belt. In 1935 with the new turn of the C.I. towards social patriotism, the work of the Communist Party among Negroes began a process of rapid deterioration. The Trotskyist movement from 1923 to 1938 took even less interest in the Negro question than the Communist Party from its foundation until 1928, and once more it was only under the insistence of the international organization that the American Marxist movement took action on the Negro question.

Trotsky began to take a special interest in the Negro question as soon as he applied himself to the problems of the United States from the point of view of building a Trotskyite revolutionary organization. From that time he never ceased to point out the importance of this question. Though scattered and to some degree incidental, his conversations and discussions are organized by a consistent approach and, altogether, constitute a remarkable example of Marxist penetration into the correct basis for any Negro work in the U.S. In any resolution on the Negro Question at this stage, it is necessary to summarize briefly his ideas.

On the question of self-determination, Trotsky believed that the differences between the West Indies, Catalonia, Poland, etc., and the situation of the Negroes in the United States were not decisive. In other words, the Negro question was a part of the national question. He firmly opposed those in the Fourth International who rejected outright the principle of self-determination for Negroes in the U.S. In a discussion in 1939 he made it clear that he did not propose that the Party advocate the slogan of self-determination for Negroes in the U.S. but he insisted that the Party should declare its obligation to struggle with the Negroes for self-determination, should they at any time demand it. Trotsky insisted that if the Negroes should decide, under the stress of unforeseen historical events (e.g. a period of fascism in the U.S.); to struggle for self-determination, the struggle would under all circumstances be progressive, for the simple reason that it could not possibly be attained except thru war against American capitalism.

Trotsky's views on the Negro question are most clearly, though not completely, contained in a discussion in 1939.* In his approach to Negro work, Trotsky based his views on the sentiments of the genuine Negro masses in the U.S. and the fact that their oppression as Negroes were so strong that they feel it at every moment.

Of those suffering from oppression and discrimination, the Negroes were the most oppressed and the most discriminated against and therefore formed part of the most dynamic milieu of the workingclass. The Party should say to the conscious elements among the Negroes that they have been convoked by the historical development to take their place in the very vanguard of the workingclass struggle for socialism. Trotsky considered that if the Party was unable to find a road to this stratum of society, in which he gave the Negroes a very important place, then it would be a confession of revolutionary futility.

While conscious of the role of the Negro in the vanguard, however, Trotsky placed a heavy emphasis always on the consciousness of Negroes as being a nationally-oppressed minority. On every possible occasion he emphasized the political conclusions that were to be drawn from the special situation of the Negroes under American capitalism for 300 years. He warned repeatedly of the probability of violent racial outbreaks among the Negroes in which they would seek to revenge themselves for all the oppression and humiliations which they had suffered.

Trotsky took the greatest interest in the Garvey movement as an expression of the genuine sentiments of the Negro masses who were always his main concern. He constantly recommended to the Party the study of the Negroes in the Civil War as a historical necessity for understanding the Negro question today. He recommended the study of Garvey's movement as an indispensable indication to the Party of the road to the Negro masses.

*Internal Bulletin, SWP, #9, June 1939

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He welcomed the idea of an independent mass organization of the Negro people, formed through the instrumentality of the party. His general approach to the Negro question can best be indicated by the following fact: He recommended that under certain circumstances the revolutionary party could withdraw its own candidate for election to Congress and support a Negro democrat put forward by a Negro community anxious to have its own Negro representative. In all these ideas Trotsky merely exemplified the application to the concrete struggle of the original principle embodied in the right to self-determination.

No task is more urgent than the collation and publication of Trotsky's writings and ideas on the Negro question in the U.S., their close study by all members of the Party; and their dissemination in an organized form among the proletariat and the Negro masses.

12. PART II - THE WORKERS PARTY AND THE NEGRO QUESTION

The problem of the Party therefore divides itself into two parts: (1) the struggles of the American proletariat for socialism and its relation to the Negro struggle for democratic rights; and (2) the independent struggles of the Negroes for democratic rights and its relation to the proletarian struggle for socialism. Under no circumstances are these separate elements to be confused or treated as one.

The Workers Party and Negro Work in the Organized Labor Movement

The Workers Party approaches Negro work in the organized labor movement from the basis of the approaching social crisis, and the preparation of the proletariat for the socialist revolution. Today one of the greatest subjective weaknesses of the American proletariat is the absence of consciousness that labor is opposed to capital for leadership of the nation. This being so, it follows that the other oppressed and discontented classes, elements and groups have not yet learned to look to labor for a partial or even a "reformist" solution to their problem. Classes learn such lessons only by massive experiences on a national scale; only in the very last stages of the revolution did the Russian peasantry learn that the proletariat was its leader. Already independent action by the Negro masses in the North is at last awakening organized labor to the fact that it must approach the Negro problem not merely as a trade union, but a social and national problem. This new development helps to clarify and define the tasks of the Party.

The Party continues, as it has done in the past, to agitate for equal rights and abolition of Jim-Crow in all aspects of industrial and union life. The Party views with great satisfaction the remarkable progress made by the CIO in its appreciation of the Negro problem as a union problem. The Party fights against the Klan and other Negro-baiting elements in the unions but does not allow the outbreaks against Negroes which have taken place in Detroit, Mobile and elsewhere to obscure the steady progress in this field.

The Party, however, goes beyond mere progressive trade-unionism. It places before the union movement the grave danger that the very existence of a Negro question in the country poses for the union movement and the country as a whole.

The Party warns the labor movement that the fascists and pro-fascist elements in their efforts to batter down organized labor, will not fail to use the growing racial tension in the country as the Nazis used anti-semitism in Germany.

The Party warns the labor movement that the coming unemployment will create grave dangers for the labor movement, particularly in developing antagonisms between white and Negro labor. The Party points out the dangerous situation in the South and the continuous reactionary and anti-labor activity of the Southern democrats and its basis in the social degradation of the Negroes. The Party, therefore, proposes to the labor movement the adoption of its transitional program for a Labor Party as the chief means in the present stage of checking this threat to its very existence. The Party boldly poses to the labor movement the necessity of showing the Negroes that labor recognizes its responsibility for solving their problems by radical measures. Labor will thus draw to itself the militant power of the vast majority of oppressed Negroes and will enormously increase its social and political power in the country.

Such a sponsoring of the Negro cause will draw the attention of all the other oppressed groups in society to labor's role. It will give enormous confidence and pride to labor itself. It will create a powerful sentiment of good will and respect for the American proletariat among the great masses in Europe, Africa and Asia. The propaganda of the Party in this respect must be bold, comprehensive and powerful in its insistence on the dangers to society and the continuing shame of the Negro problem, the necessity of proletarian solution, and the gains, direct and indirect, which will follow even the first decisive steps taken by labor.

The Party in its daily agitation draws attention of the union movement to the concrete danger represented by the outbreaks which have occurred in recent months and which sooner or later will recur with probably greater violence. The Party emphatically urges the union movement to place the responsibility unequivocally upon the enemies of the Negro people. It urges the unions to recognize that the aggressive spirit of the Negro people is the result of their unending oppression. Organized labor must not discourage, but must stimulate this militancy as one of the surest defences of democracy not only for Negroes but for organized labor itself and all the oppressed classes.

The Party urges the labor movement to take the lead in organizing this militancy and linking it to the struggle for the reconstruction of society. To white workers complaining of Negro "excesses" the Party points out, with restraint but yet inflexibly, the great importance of the Negro mass struggle and relegates these complaints to their proper subordinate sphere. Above all, it points out that in conflicts between Negroes and whites in the Negro community, the labor movement must avoid appearing in any light which may be interpreted as a "guardian of the peace", merely anxious to restore the status quo. Only by assisting the Negro movement to express its militancy in effective channels and by militantly advocating both an immediate and a general program for the Negroes as a whole, will the labor movement be able to act effectively in times of crisis and yet avoid the multiple dangers of merely acting as peace-maker. In all Negro preparations for defence against hoodlums the organized labor movement must play a leading and active part. This is the the surest preventative of all hoodlum outbursts and provocations.

The Party will remember that propaganda and agitation of this scope is of special importance for it is being carried out by no other political groups. In the present critical period when many are being more and more impelled to think beyond their immediate interests, the Negro question forms a particularly valuable means of educating the advanced workers in the general principles of socialism and mass revolutionary struggle. The Party will point out that because the Negroes have insisted on struggle, and owing to the sympathetic attitude of labor due to the large number of Negroes in its ranks, the Negro struggle in Detroit has developed a logic of its own, This has resulted in a political alliance at the recent elections between organized labor and the Negro community as a whole. Despite the loss of the election, this combination is one of the most significant stages yet reached in the struggle of labor and the Negro masses for emancipation from the ills and injustices of capitalist society. It is along these lines that militant effort on both sides complementing each other that the Party must seek, according to its strength, to direct the developing struggle against capitalist society.

14. The Workers Party and the Negro Work among Negroes

The Negroes struggle for democratic rights and socialism

The Party makes a powerful and insistent propaganda to the Negroes that the leadership of organized labor is necessary and indispensable to their successful struggle for democratic rights. Particularly in this time of crisis, it poses to them socialism as the only solution of their problem. It analyzes the economic roots of racial oppression. It emphasizes, above all, the role of competition between members of the working class in destroying white and Negro solidarity. It stresses the national leadership of labor without which the achievement of democratic rights is impossible. It emphasizes the fundamentally class nature of racial oppression and the objective unity of the oppressed in the struggle for socialism.

At the same time the Party, with the fullest consciousness of the significance of the mass independent struggles of the Negroes considers that its main agitational work among Negroes is the stimulation and encouragement of these mass struggles. Basing itself upon one of the most fundamental principles of Marxism, the Party recognizes that it is only on the basis of the continual deepening and broadening of their independent mass struggles that the Negro people will ultimately be brought to recognize that organized labor is their only genuine ally in their struggle and that their struggle is part of the struggle for socialism.

The Party, in stimulating the independent struggles of the Negro people teaches Marxism to them in the only terms in which they will learn it, the terms of their own desires and experiences. Thus at the present stage of capitalist development in America, the Party seeks wherever possible and feasible to concentrate the attention of the Negro masses upon the responsibility of the government for their oppressed condition. It therefore teaches to the Negroes continuously that the state is the executive committee of the ruling class and on this basis seeks to mobilize them in their own way and according to their own instinctive desires against the capitalist state and its dominating role in contemporary society.

The Party brings Marxism to the Negroes by emphasizing to them that the emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working-class itself. It emphasizes to the Negroes that Negro emancipation cannot take place without the vigorous and self-sacrificing struggle of the Negroes themselves. It sharply condemns that distortion of Marxist truth which states or implies that the Negroes by their independent struggles cannot get to first base without the leadership of organized labor.

The Party is on the alert to stimulate and encourage every instinctive tendency to independent organization and militant struggle of the Negro masses objectively directed against American capitalism. The history of the Negro people has shown them fertile in the creation and organization of such struggles. And it is on the basis of analysis and criticism of these creative efforts that the Party seeks to exercise its special guiding and correcting influence. It is only by this means that it can help direct the efforts of the Negro masses into channels most powerful and fruitful for their own aims and for this very reason most valuable in developing the general struggle for socialism.

The Party encourages the masses of the Negro people to seek the assistance of the organized labor movement in the organization of their own defense and in all stages of their battle for democratic rights. But in its agitation it encourages them to do so for the specific purpose, first

of all, of gaining their own democratic demands. Under no circumstances does it submerge the specific purpose of this alliance in the minds of the Negro people under any general terms of the fight for socialism. The recognition by the masses of the Negro people that organized labor is their ally in their struggle for their democratic rights can prove a far more powerful step towards socialism than the acceptance by a few Negroes of the theoretic principles of Marxism. It is from the general recognition by the masses of the alliance between the Negro struggle for democratic rights and organized labor that the possibility arises of winning not one or two but dozens of Negro militants for the revolutionary party.

The role of the Negro proletariat belongs mainly to the general development of the union and organized labor movement as a whole. The Party must be on its guard to scrutinize all policies which may deflect the Negro proletariat in the labor movement from considering itself first and foremost as an integral part of the struggle of organized labor for the rights of labor and for socialism. The oppression of the Negroes as a national minority specially prepares the Negro proletariat in the organized labor movement for a place in the very vanguard of the struggle for socialism.

The Negro proletariat, however, has a special role to play in the struggle of the Negro community for its democratic rights. The Party will stimulate the Negro proletariat within the Negro committees to take the lead in the struggle for Negro democratic rights in accordance with the role of labor in modern society. The Negro community and Negro organizations must be stimulated to use the Negro proletariat as its representative to the organized labor movement in its demand for assistance and organization of the struggle for Negro democratic rights. The link in the struggle for Negro democratic rights is between the Negro community as a whole and organized labor and not between the Negro proletariat alone and the white proletariat.

In the present stage the Party must conduct, to the extent of its resources, a vigorous and unflinching propaganda and agitation along the above lines. The present situation offers a fertile field for such work among the Negro masses. The experience of the Party with its agitation on the Harlem demonstration has already shown how receptive the Negro masses and Negro proletarian elements would be to agitation of this kind.

The Party is certain to reap concrete results because there is not at the present time a single labor or radical organization which looks upon the militant Negro demonstrations as anything else except at best justifiable because of unfortunate necessities. This means the Party will be listened to eagerly by the Negro masses.

The Party needs to analyze carefully and draw the lessons of such outbreaks as that in Harlem. Only thus will it be able to offer guidance to the Negroes and to the proletariat, jointly with them to prepare for future outbreaks, and jointly study the revolutionary development of the American masses. Every "minor" crisis, in a capitalist state, says Lenin, discloses to us in miniature the elements and germs of the battles which must inevitably take place on a large scale during a big crisis.

The Harlem demonstration was no "minor" strike. It was, as has been shown, an organized demonstration, a Negro nationalist protest, on a stage far higher than Carveyism, involving actively or sympathetically, tens of thousands of people. On the day of the demonstration could be seen on one

side the masses of the people and on the other, "keeping order", the local municipality (La Guardia), the Social-Democracy (Crosswithe), the Stalinists (Max Yergen and Hope Stevens), the Negro petty-bourgeois (Walter White and Lester Granger). Dewey announced that he held in reserve the armed forces of the state. These formed one united group while the masses in the streets booed at them.

The Party must resolutely take its place with the protesting masses and expose continuously the unity of those arrayed against them. The Party will not adopt merely the attitude of explaining why the masses take such steps. It corrects the exaggerations and mistakes of the masses but as one of them, taking part in the struggle with them, and seeking to increase and to direct their justified anger into more constructive channels. In the Marxist tradition it subordinates all to the fact that the masses have refused passively to endure injustice and have violently expressed their hatred. The Party propagates these ideas and condemns the judicial or explanatory or social-worker attitude. It is only on this basis that the Party, which is then more certain to get the ear of the masses, can help them to realize their mistakes, and help them to organize greater, more powerful and more effective demonstrations which can in turn become nationwide and develop into genuine militant movements.

The Party and the Negro nationalist movements

The Party wages a merciless war against the Negro nationalist movements such as the Garveyites, the pro-Japanese organizations, etc. It demonstrates their fantastic and reactionary proposals for Negro emancipation. It explains in detail the utter impossibility of their realization and, furthermore, takes the trouble to explain that even if these were realized, it would not in any way benefit the great masses of the Negro people. The Party seizes this opportunity to analyze and denounce the imperialism of the Japanese and the oppression of the Japanese masses. Thus in terms of the Negro's own life and interests it builds a sentiment of solidarity of the oppressed on an international scale.

At the same time, however, the Party must study these movements carefully, to differentiate between the Negro nationalist leaders and their sincere but misguided followers. It explains to the masses that the desire for the success of Japan is in reality a desire for the destruction of the apparently unbreakable power of their own oppressor, American imperialism, and the humbling of its pride. The impending defeat of Japan will strike a heavy blow at any hopes of assistance, direct or indirect, to the "colored peoples" from Japanese victory. The national movements, however, even before the defeat of Japan, used Garveyism and pro-Japanese sentiment merely as an ideological basis for a policy directed towards strengthening Negro nationalism in the United States. The movements which seek "to drive the Jew out of Harlem or the South Side" have a valid class base. They are the reactions of the resentful Negro seeking economic relief and some salve for his humiliated racial pride. That these sentiments can be exploited by fanatical idiots, Negro anti-Semites, or self-seeking Negro business men, does not alter their fundamentally progressive basis. This progressiveness is in no way to be confused with the dissatisfaction of the demoralized white petty-bourgeoisie which seeks refuge in fascism. American reaction can and probably will finance or encourage some of these movements (Bilbo and back to Africa) in order to feed ill-will. But the Negroes are overwhelmingly proletarian, semi-proletarian and peasant in

their class composition. Such is the whole course of American history that any nation-wide Fascist movement (however disguised) will be compelled to attack the Negro struggle for equality. But the struggle for equality is the main driving force of the Negro mass movement.

The Party, therefore, while boldly attacking the nationalist movement, does not in any way treat these movements in the same category as it would a fascist movement. It attacks them on the basis of a program for Negro struggle as outlined above. It is the absence of a comprehensive program and action for Negro rights and Negro struggle advanced by organized labor; it is the sectarian presentation of the doctrine of the Negro struggle as the class struggle which gives strength to the nationalists. Such is the obvious bankruptcy of the Nationalists' magic-carpet programs for salvation in all parts of the world that their chief strength, in Harlem for instance, is due not to their programs but to their active role in protests and demonstrations designed to improve the conditions of the Negroes here in America.

The Party and the Negro petty-bourgeoisie

An economic examination of the American scene will demonstrate how slight is the economic basis of the Negro petty-bourgeoisie. The Negro petty bourgeoisie is for the most part a woefully disproportionate group of intelligentsia, well-paid personal domestics, stage performers, etc.. Bourgeois society has rigidly excluded them not only from social contact with the whites but also from those positions and opportunities of sharing in the surplus value, and gaining distinction, which binds so many of the white petty-bourgeois functionaries to bourgeois society. They can do harm as in the March On Washington Committee, but their impotence to restrain the masses of the Negroes when these are anxious to move has been demonstrated during the past period. Such influence, as for instance, the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie has exercised over the Indian masses, the Negro petty-bourgeoisie can never exercise over the Negroes. The Party observes that the instinct for direct action of the Negro masses ignored the NAACP or the League, as circumstances may dictate. But the Party is on the alert to enter those newer organizations which the Negroes are forming today in such profusion, if even sometimes for only limited purposes.

The Party keeps up an unceasing attack on the Negro petty-bourgeois leaders, but is careful to do so, not on general grounds, but because they do not carry on a militant struggle for democratic rights and betray the struggle at every opportunity. In this respect the Party attacks the petty-bourgeois leaders of the Negroes in a manner approximating its attacks on the labor leadership of the social democracy.

The Negroes and the Labor Party

The Party must carry on a militant agitation among the Negroes on behalf of an independent Labor Party. It is a sign of their special role in American society and the maturing social consciousness of the Negro people that as a body they have made within the last few years a rapid change in their attitude towards organized labor. Should organized labor put forward a militant program for an independent Labor Party the past history of Negroes and present indications show that the movement of the Negroes in its favor will be strong and perhaps overwhelming. The Negroes in all probability will play a role on the left wing of the organi-

zation. But here also the Negroes' situation as a specially oppressed minority, though not necessarily obtruded, must be taken into consideration. An Independent Labor Party in the United States as in many European countries will probably consist of a federation of various groups, with the union movement providing the base, the driving force and the leadership.

The Independent Labor Party will not tolerate any distinction of color within its ranks. Local non-union organizations of all types will seek affiliation. Negroes should be encouraged to join such local affiliations. But the Party must carry on a vigorous agitation among militant Negro organizations struggling for Negro democratic rights not only to join the agitation for an Independent Labor Party but also to take an active part in its formation.

At the present stage of capitalist crisis in the U. S. this particular work by the Party offers exceptional means of forming a bridge between the independent struggle of the Negro masses and the general problem of the reconstruction of society.

The Negro organizations should be encouraged themselves to formulate demands for their own democratic rights and the Party must insist that neither the Democratic nor the Republican party is the type of organization which will be able to give the Negroes an opportunity to struggle for these rights within a broader framework. At the same time, even to the most nationalistic of the Negro organizations, the Party should pose the question of themselves forming a program not only for Negro democratic rights but for the country as a whole. They will look, not to European imperialism in Africa nor to Japanese imperialism, but to potential allies in this country and make their own contribution to the elaboration of that type of social order in which the Negroes will at last find equality. This must be presented to the Negro organizations as an imperative duty for Negro organizations to perform. It is by this means that the Negroes, on the basis of their own nationalistic preoccupations are brought to consider their own problems in relation to the fundamental problem of the whole social order. The Party will seize this opportunity to present its own transitional program to Negroes, for them to consider in the light of their intensive desire for some solution, not only immediate but general, of the degradation from which they have suffered for so many centuries. Such is the proletarian composition of the Negro people, so hostile are they to the existing social order because of the special degradation to which it subjects them, that the political organization which knows how to utilize their preoccupation with their democratic rights can find ample ways and means for carrying on that socialistic propaganda which must always be the climax of revolutionary effort, particularly in this period. Starting from and never leaving the basis of the independent struggles for democratic rights, the Party will find in the increasing contradictions in the social order the possibility of uniting in ever higher stages of development the objective movement of the American proletariat towards leadership of the nation and the movement of the masses of Negro people toward the American proletariat.

December 20, 1943

J.R. JOHNSON

SUPPLEMENT TO POLITICAL RESOLUTION
ON TRADE UNION ACTIVITY

Since the last convention of our Party the United States has entered the Second World Imperialist War. As the war has unfolded during the past two years the working class and the unions have been under constant attack by the employers and the government in an effort to install "national unity" and to soften the ever-rising crescendo of dissatisfaction and complaint in the ranks of organized labor.

The rigorous attitude of the ruling class toward the organized workers has created problems in the shops and the unions which the unions themselves have been slow to recognize for what they really are: namely, problems which require for their solution the most determined class struggle and proletarian independent political action.

This situation while difficult, especially in face of anti-labor acts and wartime regulations, nevertheless presented an excellent opportunity to the revolutionaries for political work in plants and unions. In the first place the proletariat was faced with an ever-increasing clamor for regimentation, for a "firmer labor policy," for stronger insistence by the Roosevelt government that labor subordinate its interests and organizations to the necessities of the imperialists war aims. To this was added a planned assault on the living standards of the workers; through the most onerous tax burdens, a ceiling on wages, ever-rising prices and the fastening of the workers to the job.

Labor however has not submitted meekly to the demands of the government and the bourgeoisie. While they have been restrained in their statements and acts, it is clear that even the class collaborationist pro-war leadership of the labor movement begins to give way before the pressure of the ranks and to raise its voice, albeit feebly, against the machinations of the Roosevelt government and the attacks of the employers.

Our Party began its operation in the factory and the labor movement after the last convention fortified with the Party's analysis of the situation confronting the working class and oriented with the Party prognosis on the probable course of the war, the relations of labor to the war and the ruling class and the probable response of the workers to these events.

The Workers Party took a clear and unambiguous position that the period following the entrance of the United States into the war would see increased militancy from the workers, that they would not continue the retreat which had been ordered by their leadership and that there would be strikes and threats of strikes.

The Party took the position that our Party alone was even in modest degree ideologically prepared to assume responsibility for political propaganda and agitation in this period.

That the Party was correct has been proved by the events of the past two years. This is in marked contrast to the dunderhead conservatism, pessimism, passively and head-in-the-sand policy of the Socialist Workers Party. This party which claims the right to wear the mantle of Trotsky, steadily proclaimed that the militancy of the proletariat had been dammed up by the war and that the task of the revolutionaries should be one of watchful waiting, concealment of their program, and "conservatism" of themselves.

This mood did not penetrate our Party to any appreciable extent. Based on our political analyses and energized by an increasing proletarian consciousness, the party went to its daily tasks and made modest but real gains. We were able to make progress despite the loss - for service on another front - of many leading and experienced comrades. The work was carried forward by younger and less seasoned comrades. Despite their mistakes and their fumbling at times, the comrades who were left have exhibited fortitude, perseverance and genuine revolutionary loyalty and integrity. As a whole they have stood up against the reactionary United States patriots in the unions as well as against the more vicious attacks of the Stalinist reactionaries.

This bears clear testimony to the essential soundness of our line and the correctness of our tactical approach. It is on all of these factors that we will build in the future.

The trade union report to the Second Annual Convention two years ago revolved mainly around a discussion of the proletarian orientation of the Party. The first step in this orientation was to get the membership into the factories and into the unions. This step was rapidly and successfully completed. Our comrades entered the unions and on the basis of their union activity many of them were elevated to posts of leadership and responsibility.

By the time of the Active Workers Conference, February 1943, the Party was prepared for the next step: definite political activity leading to recruitment to the Party. In the course of consummating this step the fractions were to exploit the distribution of Labor Action and the influence the paper had developed among thousands of workers in the factories. The fractions were advised to take the necessary steps for progressively revealing themselves as "Labor Action People" and as members of the WP.

Wherever this policy and procedure were adopted and carried out the prestige of the comrades was enhanced, classes of "contacts" and "prospects" were formed and new members were recruited. Also comrades who consistently followed the line laid down by the Party were elected in the union to positions of greater responsibility. In most instances they were able to hold their own with the Stalinists and in a few instances to deal the Stalinists severe blows in union contests.

Despite the fact that the Party has made notable progress in its trade union activity, there have been some notable deficiencies. These defects must be corrected in order to accelerate the future gains of the Party. We can point out first our failure to effect efficient national organization of trade union activity. The responsibility for this lies primarily with the National Labor Committee. It is not easy under wartime conditions for the committee to function as it should but even with these limitations it was possible for the Committee to have done a better job of education and organizing and coordinating the work of the fractions. It is urgent that the Party establish an active and efficient Trade Union Department.

The Party has not issued a single trade union pamphlet or other literature to the workers. The whole task of propaganda has devolved on Labor Action.

It is possible to improve the work of the fractions to a considerable extent. In the months to come our work in the shops and unions must be gauged and judged not by our past accomplishments, or by the successes or failures of our opponents, but by the magnitude of the tasks before us.

The membership has not yet developed adequate political understanding and competence. We have not learned how to apply the political line of the Party to the practical situations met in the shop and the union. The Party political resolutions and the trade union resolutions are not sufficiently understood as guides to action. To develop such understanding and effectiveness it is imperative that the fractions adopt the practice of organized study of the political and trade union resolutions. The entire political activity of the fractions should consciously revolve around and be based on the analyses and directives contained in these documents.

Not only must we aim to heighten the theoretical grasp of the fractions but we must strengthen their ideological homogeneity. This result of course can only flow from the theoretical strength and political cohesiveness of the Party as a whole. In the last analysis this can only be accomplished by the National Committee of the Party.

It is necessary that the fractions understand that in the shops and unions they are the political front of the Party. This indicates the necessity for the fractions to play an independent role: always, to one degree or another, advancing its own program; (Party Program) neither tail-ending the workers, specializing in "deals" with the top leadership, or subordinating its program and activity to other groups. There are times and occasions when this may be necessary, as for instance in the present case of the attack on Local _____ in New York. In such cases it is both permissible and imperative that the fraction subordinate, temporarily its differences with the administration or other progressive groups and take the lead in calling for an all-out defense of the local or international. This tactic in no way violates the independent program of the fraction or its freedom of independent action. On the contrary in carrying on a struggle for the defense of a union against reactionary attack, we carry on a struggle for progressive policies and for the independence of the union from the bourgeoisie. We thus promote a situation in the union which facilitates our own independent political activity.

With the sole exception of the Stalinists, the other political groups do not represent any serious hindrance to us in our work. This has been demonstrated during the past two years. We do not face the Socialist Party as an obstacle. The only group standing on a similar political line is the Socialist Workers Party. But here also no real difficulties are to be found. Exactly two years after our Party had foreseen an upsurge of the trade union workers and had pointed out the reasons for this, the Socialist Workers Party limps feebly along admitting way late that the rank and file are "dead serious about breaking the Little Steel Formula," and that "the Roosevelt government will be in the throes of a new labor crisis as the rank and file press for action in the coming wage negotiations."

The sterile conservatism of the SWP was seen most clearly in the attitude of this party to the important situation created by the miners wage negotiations. Flowing from their fundamental politics the SWP failed completely to understand the mood of the miners, the attitude of Lewis or the significance of the strikes after they had got under way. The watchword of this party was "caution," and more "caution:" caution to the extent of advising workers under its control not to run for delegate to the union convention for fear they would be spotted by the FBI.

The Communist Party is a different and more difficult problem. Here we are faced with a large and well-organized group, with influence and thousands of members and followers in the unions. Their unscrupulousness,

their anti-labor tactics and their vicious and reactionary pro-Stalin and pro-war politics make them a very troublesome adversary.

Our experiences during the past year, however, should make it clear that the Stalinists are finding it more and more difficult to hold the workers under their influence and control. Our growing influence in the ranks has been shown by the attention that the Stalinists have given LABOR ACTION the Party and our comrades in the plants. LABOR ACTION has been attacked far more by the Stalinists than any other labor or political paper. Despite these attacks and despite the far greater strength of the Stalinists, workers under our influence and guidance have repudiated and defeated them in several situations. This shows that while the Stalinists are a real danger, they are not impregnable in any union. They can be defeated and it is possible to make real gains even in locals or unions at present under their control.

The recently announced dissolution of the Communist Party presents a new situation for the WP and the working class. Like a snake shedding its skin or changing its coloration, the Stalinist organization gives up its name only in order that it may more easily carry forward its long record of reaction and betrayal.

This new "turn" of the Stalinists presents a new danger, which the Party must meet with increased vigilance. Operating in the unions under the mantle of Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt and with a plea for national unity as just simple Americans without party label, the Stalinists may be harder for the workers to detect. This danger can only be adequately met by alertness and by seizing on every proper opportunity for presenting the Party line to the workers and the unions.

* * * *

The year 1943 was marked by a new militancy on the part of organized labor. While the outcome in action was different from that of 2½ years ago that is, the actions were not mass actions in the sense of thousands of strikers exerting force on the picket lines it is correct to say that what the union did in the latter period was far more significant, pregnant and portentous. The events of 1943 brought to the forefront of the struggle, again, the miners who reasserted their right to be assigned the role of militant vanguard of the organized labor movement. The four walk-outs of the United Mine Workers Union were the dynamo which put the workers in motion. The year ended with the threatened strike of the steel workers and the militant pronouncements of the hitherto peaceful, placid and business-like railway unions, whose leaders talked back to Roosevelt in the most truculent manner.

It is easy to adopt a disdainful manner toward the unions for their failure to go farther than they did in 1943. Such an attitude, however, would be wrong and demonstrate complete inability to grasp the significance of these events. The strikes and threatened strikes of 1943 took place in the face of persistent and planned attacks on the unions. These actions were blows at the War Labor Board, actions taken in spite of the Smith-Connelly and the various State anti-labor bills. All in all the actions of 1943 demonstrated that the working class was really more mature than three years ago, even though then its resentment took a more violent form.

The events of the past year revealed that the workers in the whole na-

tion were becoming aware, in a general way, that as a group they were being pushed into a corner and that their group interests were being violated and attacked. This is the real meaning of the influence of the miners strikes on the other unions, of the emergence of the railway unions from their dotage and the defense of the Brewster local by various and more conservative elements in the labor movement.

There is every reason to be genuinely optimistic about the future militancy of the working class and the unions. It is highly improbable that the workers will be held in check either by their leaders or by the Roosevelt government. The struggle in which the proletariat is now engaged on a national scale is a political struggle and increasing numbers of workers faintly begin to perceive this.

The workers have made a start in understanding that economic action alone is adequate. They are beginning to acquire an elementary understanding of the need for independent workingclass political action. The present political action campaign of the CIO should not be dismissed as totally reactionary and without value in contributing to the advancement of independent political thinking by labor. While the campaign is headed by the reactionary pro-Roosevelt Hillman, the mass of the CIO members do not have the identical notions as Hillman. The ranks are not thinking the same as Hillman, Murray and others, nor do they have the same aims. The revolutionaries in their own ranks should welcome this political action campaign of the CIO, enter its conferences with their own program and above all become the most active and vocal propagandists in the shop and union for independent political action and the formation of the labor party. Every bit of genuine political experience will contribute to the political clarification of the workers. This is true even of their participation in the distorted political action setup of the CIO under Hillman and Murray. The politically toadying to Roosevelt by the leadership will no more be able to dam up the political development of the workers than the leadership's no-strike pledge could stop strikes.

The economic and political development of the proletariat will be advanced by the passing of the New Deal. Thousands of workers today understand that the New Deal is dead: "shot by Roosevelt" is the way it was put by one of our sharecropper comrades. This means that the sinister development of the block between the CIO and the government will not appear in such attractive garb to the ranks of labor. They will interpret what they will call a change on the part of Roosevelt, as pushing the unions out of the government, as a desertion by the Roosevelt government. The workers will begin to see the New Deal for what it was: a panacea for the ailments of a decrepit social order, which sterilized the workers politically and led them into the caravan of the imperialist war.

The capitalist aims of the Roosevelt government reach new depths in the proposed National Service Act. The revolutionaries must point out to the workers that among other evils, one of the main objects of this act is to lay the groundwork for the crushing of the unions after the war, when the hypocritical bourgeois slogan of "unity for the preservation of democracy" shall have been completely shattered in the minds of the workers. It is a precautionary measure to insure "order" in the factories. The soldiers and sailors are to be pacified by bribery after the workers have been regimented by a National Service Act.

In the coming days a heavy responsibility will rest on our Party. The proletariat shows no tendency toward continued pacifism. The struggle for the restoration of collective bargaining with the employers and the shift from traditional collective bargaining to direct dealing with an ever more anti-labor Roosevelt government will serve to educate the working class will serve to realize the class unity of the finance-industrial bourgeoisie and "the government," thus exposing the capitalist nature of the state.

The Workers Party now must prepare to begin the third phase of its proletarian orientation. The first phase was to enter the factory and the unions. The second was agitation for the Party line, the securing of subscriptions to Labor Action, the organization of classes for contacts and prospects and the recruiting of individual member. While this activity must be continued, the Party must take another step. The next step must be:

1. The formation of Labor Action groups in every plant where there are subscribers or known supporters of Labor Action. This group should call itself "Labor Action Group" and that should be clearly understood by all members of the group. The Labor Action Group is not a general progressive group but a formation of militants, with the fraction as the core, brought together for consideration of political questions primarily.

The Labor Action Group should be conceived of primarily as the shock troops of the plant and union and as immediate prospects for Party membership. It must be a more or less disciplined and integrated group and not a group of people who are just dissatisfied with the leadership.

2. The Labor Action Group should have as one of its perspectives propaganda and agitation among the progressives for the formation of progressive groups, local and national. This activity however is to be generally linked with the formation and development of the Labor Action Group itself.

3. On a local scale in a single plant or local the Labor Action Group may from time to time participate in larger and broader progressive groups for specific purposes and may even initiate the formation of such groups. The Labor Action Group must at all times though maintain its independence.

4. The fraction and the Labor Action Group must pay especial attention to the Negro workers in the plants and locals. The Negro workers have numerous grievances. It is the responsibility of the fractions to take the lead in aiding the Negro workers to settle these grievances. Every Labor Action Group and every larger progressive group should make special efforts to embrace Negro members.

PRACTICAL WORK

INTERNAL

I. Training of the Fractions.

1. Political Education

a. Study of Political and Trade Union Resolutions as part of fraction educational meeting.

b. Fractions to study text on History of Labor Movement, Texts on Trade Unionism and mimeographed material to be supplied by Trade Union Dept.

2. Labor news from fractions to L.A.

3. Each fraction to have quota for L.A. subs from plant.

4. Each fraction to have quota for recruits from plant.

5. Each fraction to report to National Labor Committee monthly on number of subs to LA and recruits.

EXTERNAL

1. Classes of "contacts" and "prospects."

2. Formation of Labor Action Group.

3. Subscriptions for LA from the plant.

4. Fraction members in plant to visit LA subscribers in plant.

5. Recruiting of New Members.

RESOLUTION ON POLITICAL ACTIVITY AMONG NEGROES

1. For the furtherance of its revolutionary aims and in order to extend its proletarian orientation to the most exploited section of the population the Workers Party must turn its face resolutely to the Negro masses in the United States.

2. The Negroes are a race of toilers; the most oppressed and proscribed group in the country. But despite the most loathsome discrimination and the most barbaric treatment accorded human beings in any civilized country, the Negroes have revealed no tendency to submit to this mistreatment. After 300 years of debasement the Negroes continue to strive for their democratic rights.

3. As workers Negroes have ever been ready to enter the trade unions and join with the white workers in the struggle for the economic demands of labor.

4. The Negroes thus constitute a vast reservoir of potential revolutionary man-power. Here is a fruitful field not only for Party recruiting, but also a force which under the inspiration of the Workers Party and the program of the labor movement, can give a great lift to the revolutionary forces and the advancement of the interests of the proletarian revolution.

THE BLIGHT OF SLAVERY AND THE STRUGGLE

FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS.

5. The debasement of the Negro in the United States has its roots in slavery. Two and a half centuries of bondage placed a stigma on the Negro which even after several decades of freedom he has not been able to wipe away. While the Negro as human property was a means of capitalist accumulation for the English and States bourgeoisie, it was this same slavery which fastened on the Negro the stain of racial inferiority and forged the chains for holding him to the lowest social, economic and political status after emancipation. Not only this but it was during slavery that what was in effect class divisions, were established among Negroes. This was based on the difference of status which obtained between a half million free Negroes with \$50,000,000 in property in 1860 and the Negro slaves in the fields and swamps. It was a cleavage between men of property, who had visions of getting on in the world, and the propertyless slave whose main and all-possessing aim was to cease to be nothing more than a piece of property.

6. Another division was established in slavery which laid the basis for caste distinctions among Negroes. This was the system of concubinage, cohabitation between master and slave woman. The result of this type of race mixing was the degradation of the slave woman, the degeneration of family life and the emergence of a mulatto caste which often considered itself superior to the black Negroes.

7. This offspring was either freed or retained on the plantation as house servants. The fact that these slaves did not work in the fields, and lived and ate at the "big house", set them apart as a caste and engendered in them a feeling of superiority over the Negroes from the fields and the cabins. From the gouse servants and the favorites of the slave owners divisions often based on color which carried over after emancipation.

8. The mass of Negroes however initiated during the slave days a struggle for democratic rights. The slave insurrections, the passage to freedom over the underground railway, the desertions to the union army, were all blows struck by the Negro for liberation and the opportunity to function as free men in a world of free human beings.

9. After emancipation the freedmen were thrown immediately into competition for jobs with northern white labor and the poverty stricken white workers of the South. The black slave rebellions were in the past and the freeman was ready for integration into the life of the nation under the aegis of bourgeois-democratic abolition humanitarianism. But the integration did not take place. Expanding northern capitalism was more interested in economic penetration of the South than in the equalitarian notions of the abolition-democracy. The Negro was turned over the erstwhile slave owners with their Black Codes and KKK. In return the way was cleared for the new northern finance-industrial bourgeoisie to begin the economic exploitation of the South.

10. The difficulties of the freemen were intensified by the indifference or downright hostility of the new trade union organizations and white labor. The state was set in this period for barring the Negro from industry, from the benefits of union membership and from the simple democratic rights promised him in the Constitution and the 14th and 15th amendments.

11. The northern bourgeoisie found a new role for the ex-slave to play: a unique role. The Negro was assigned the function of a special labor reserve. The presence in the country of nearly 5,000,000 freedmen; untrained and illiterate was a boon to the young system of "free enterprise" just beginning the conquest of the North American continent. Thus began the triple oppression of the Negro: exploitation as a wage-earner, economic robbery as a Negro and political and social inequality.

12. The conscious plan of the Northern bourgeoisie was to hold the Negro in reserve in the lowest paid and meanest jobs, and then to inculcate in him the belief that his plight was due wholly to the antagonism of the white workers or to some sort of inferiority of the Negro which unfitted him for anything but the dirtiest and heaviest labor.

13. It was the definite intention of the northern bourgeoisie to provide capitalism enterprise with a mass of cheap labor; a group that could be fitted into an hierarchical scheme: Negroes, poor white common labor, white skilled labor. This plan also envisaged the use of the Negro as a strike-breaker and a constant threat to be used at will, to frustrate the social, economic and

political presumptions of white labor.

14. Thus did northern capitalism begin its post civil war career of exploitation and robbery. Thus the bourgeoisie drew white labor into its net, incited fratricidal warfare between white and black workers and laid the foundations for the continued misery and exploitation of the proletarian masses: white and black; North, South, East and West.

15. The political apex of the structure of bourgeois rule was the Republican Party; the Party of Lincoln, the northern bourgeoisie with its southern comprador underlings, and the northern abolition-democracy. The Negro masses followed the northern bourgeois liberals and the petty-bourgeois Negro politicians into the Republican Party where they remained until the New Deal revolt of 1932.

16. It is not difficult to understand how and why the newly emancipated Negroes turned to the Republicans. This was the way it looked to the ex-slaves. They were not acquainted with the intricacies and ramifications of the slavery and the slave trade and the participation of the North in this trade. Neither could they have understood that the Republican Party was first of all the political instrument of the Northern finance-industrial bourgeoisie and that this class was primarily interested in control and domination of the national resources and the national market. This was illustrated for instance, in the infamous Compromise of 1876, in its attitude toward the Homestead Acts and the conniving at the grabbing of the public domain by the railroads and their raiding of the national and state treasuries.

17. The perfidious treatment of the Negro was also occasioned by the desire of the northern bourgeoisie to placate the southern leadership, establish the ex-slave barons as an appendage of northern capitalism to the end that the southern market and natural resources would be available to northern enterprise and investment. In the political sphere the Republican Party became the administrative and managerial agency of the bourgeoisie for effecting this transformation.

THE FREEDMEN AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT

18. The vicissitudes and struggles accompanying slavery had thrown up a militant group of Negroes who took their places at the forefront of the fight for Negro rights in the uncertain days following emancipation. Their leaders were of two types: Republican politicians and office-holders and the embryonic trade unionists. Douglass and Langston were symbols of the former and Myers, Downing and Martin as well as Douglass (who at one time was president and his son secretary) and Langston did not mean that all of these men had the same outlook on the questions effecting the masses of Negroes. In fact the difference in attitude of the two groups resulted in Negroes being lead to petty-bourgeois politics and into the web of the Republican Party. This was a triumph for the petty-bourgeois ideology of the Negro leadership and the capitalist ideology of the northern abolition-democracy.

19. This conflict between the inchoate economic viewpoint of the Negro trade unionists and the conscious political ideas of the Negro politicians, was carried over to the relations between the Colored National Labor Union and the National Labor Union. The NLU leaders were opposed to the Republican Party and inclined toward the Populist propagandists. Such political heterodoxy was anathema to the Negro politicians. The controversy reached a climax in 1872 when the CNLU passed a resolution repudiating the NLU.

20. This action was not due alone to differences in political outlook. It is reasonable to believe that if the NLU had not been so lukewarm on the matter of the admission of Negroes and had put up a fight against the anti-Negro forces in the labor movement, the views of a man like Downing might have prevailed in the CNLU. Downing had already taken the position that the Republicans should have been more consistent and harder in dealing with the enemy. He appealed to Negro and white labor to work together in the cause of labor. He also expressed the opinion once that the economic problems which the Negro faced were more fundamental than political activity.

21. The next phase of the Negro's relation to organized labor was in connection with the Knights of Labor. The KL was the first trade union which took an unequivocal and unambiguous position on the Negro. They stood for the complete assimilation of the Negro worker into the labor movement. In all about 60,000 Negroes became members of the Knights.

22. The KL however with its all-inclusiveness and rather hazy notions about contemporary capitalism, the class structure of bourgeois society and the prominence of the skilled worker could not compete successfully with the AFL. The very fact that the KL decided to include the Negro and the common white working masses, only added to its difficulties and was one of the causes of its decline and disintegration. The KL leaders did not understand that in this period the skilled artisan was the decisive section of labor, that the AFL was seeking control of the labor market basing itself on the skilled worker. The AFL was not only opposed to taking in Negroes but was indifferent to the plight of the unskilled white worker.

23. This was the apostasy of the labor movement: its indifference to and misunderstanding of the question of the Negro as a proletarian question that could not be handled by labor after the pattern of the bourgeoisie. The failure of the white workers to realize the meaning of what Marx was talking about when he said that labor in a white skin could never be free so long as labor in a black skin was enslaved, was the great tragedy of the Civil War and post-Civil War days. The fact that white labor left the freedmen unprotected from the designs of the industrial bourgeois political dictators was a guarantee for the spoliation of the Negro people that was to proceed unchecked for decades after emancipation.

24. The abolition-democracy which assayed the role of defender of the Negro, was a part of the northern bourgeoisie and in full ideological support of capitalism. It is probable that a large part of the support of the main economic ideas of the new capital-

ist enterprisers and financiers. They were the propazanda shock troops of the anti-slavery North. In addition to their support of capitalism they were firm believers in the rights of man and human equality. They were themselves and the foreparents of the philanthropists who established school, churches and missions all over the Wouth for the Negro. On the matter of northern philanthropy, Spero and Harris have the following to say in "The Black Worker:" "...White northern philanthropy by accepting the southern doctrine of racial separation became a powerful instrument for fortifying 'white supremacy' and 'keeping the Negro in his place.'"

25. The consequence of all these untoward events was to place the Negro on the fringes of industry and his treatment as a pariah for seven decades after emancipation. This meant that Negroes were left to fend for themselves and to protect themselves against a young, vigorous and predatory bourgeoisie bent on enriching itself by the short route possible. Thus for 70 years the Negro was debased by a bourgeois-democratic government apparatus and locked out by an organized labor movement gripped by the most stupid policy of class collaboration yet seen in the New World.

26. This was the lot of a group which had been in bondage for 250 years, which had produced courageous, daring and militant journalists and insurrectionists, which had fought heroically in northern armies and exposed itself to the most inhuman retaliation from slave owners; they were refused a place among labor, which was rightfully theirs. The Negroes were denied the right - which they had earned - to contribute their loyalty, faith, courage and their numbers for the further enrichment of the great heritage of the world labor movement.

27/ In the face of this situation the Negro masses were well nigh helpless. Unorganized, untutored and misled, socially degraded, sold over the political bargain counter and industrially ostracized. He was safely delivered to the leading political organ of the bourgeoisie and locked out by a labor movement that could and should have taken the lead in fighting for his freedom. It should be emphasized that Negroes were ready and willing to enter the labor movement. They proved this by the thousands who joined the Knights of labor, by their continuous gestures at forming all Negro unions, by their support of the IWW and finally by their rush into the CIO when it came on the scene.

28. After the debacle and betrayal of the Reconstruction Period the Freedman found himself pushed into a definitely inferior social position. He had passed from chattel slavery through a brief period of political exaltation to the status of an oppressed race with a civil and social status comparable to that of the Jews in Czarist Russia or in fascist Germany today.

29. The short-lived block between the plundering northern bourgeoisie and the Negro was broken and the Negroes were cast asunder. This bourgeoisie, keeping its eye on the fat profits to accrue from industrial exploration of the South turned the Negroes over to southern rapine. The Negro was a freed slave; he was branded with this mark, stigmatized and prepared for super exploitation and robbery. This was easy because the color of his skin

told the story.

30. The Negroes of course did not understand these things. When he saw that his own class did not want him he turned to the class enemy and the real culprit in the drama; the northern bourgeoisie. Willing as always to sow seeds of discord in the working class, northern capitalists made the best of the Negro's importunity - which the capitalists themselves had engineered. They posed as friends of the Negro building schools and churches and establishing funds and foundations for Negro welfare. Booker Washington said that in slavery the black worker looked to his master for protection against the poor white. After emancipation he looked to his employer for protection against the hostile white worker.

31. Today, even in the midst of the war, which its defenders say is a war against fascism and for democracy, the Negro is confronted with the denial of democratic rights, the persistence of his inferior status and the necessity for struggle for social, political and economic equality. The Negro people are still faced with the problem of bringing themselves up to the level of the white workers. This has served to bring home to the Negro not only the necessity for examining the meaning of bourgeoisie democracy in the United States but the validity of the claim that he should support the war.

32. This struggle for democratic rights is not a struggle against the backward sectionalism of the South nor the rampant anti-Negro attitudes of that section but a consistent struggle against a national policy of Jim-Crow. It would be a serious political error for the Party or the Negroes to fall prey to the illusion that this is even mainly a problem of the South. While there are important and significant differences between the North and the South, the differentiation is not basic. What is significant is that in both sections, in the country at large the Negro is looked upon as inferior and given a status of second class citizen.

33. It is this group disability which constitutes the Negro an oppressed race: this denial of social, political and economic equality. The crudest manifestations of Negro oppression: terroristic practices, Negro baiting, mob law and lynching are but the continuation by other means of the non-violent jim-crow policy of the national bourgeoisie and the federal government.

34. The Party must participate in this struggle for democratic rights in a practical way. This means for the Party and its members to support and work in all movements that have for their purpose the elevation of the Negro to the same level as other racial minorities in the country up to the same level which has been attained by the white proletariat.

35. This struggle must not be placed in the same category as the general struggles of the working class for democratic rights. This would be a false approach that could only be taken by those totally ignorant of the dual disability of the American Negro. Neither should the Party or the Negroes be guided by the reformist dictum that the only struggle against jim-crow is a direct struggle for socialism. The WP rejects this social-democratic and reformist cringing before the bourgeois conspirators and the misguided white proletarian purveyors of hate and class disunity. For the Negro now, the first stage in the struggle for socialism lies through the struggle for democratic rights: the struggle to bring himself socially to the stage the white worker has reached.

36. The WP does not consider the struggle for democratic rights an end in itself. The Party does not look upon Negro or mixed organizations formed for leading this struggle as ends in themselves, to be permanently maintained and useful in all situations and in all circumstances. While the Party is positive and sincere in its demands for Negro equality, urging the Negro to carry on the fight ceaselessly and relentlessly, the Party has its own correct Marxian outlook and aims: the consolidation of the whole proletariat, irrespective of race, color or nationality.

37. The main strategy of the WP in the struggle for democratic rights and in the Negro organization is to promote class conflict between the petty

bourgeois (and bourgeois) Negroes and the Negro proletarian masses. We seek to win the Negro toilers to the class struggle, class consciousness, the struggle for socialism and the Workers Party. In the concrete circumstances the ordeal of agitation for democratic rights and the economic struggle of the Negro proletarians in the trades unions, is provided the best means for bringing the Negro workers into class struggle and class consciousness. The Party will have as its aim, therefore, the transformation of this struggle into the struggle for complete workers democracy.

38

In view of these considerations the WP will approach Negroes and the Negro organizations with an appeal directed primarily to the proletarians. Our aim is to break the wage-earners away from the stultifying, defeatist class collaborationist Negro leadership. This is the first step in creating a class rupture between the proletarian Negroes and the Negro leader clique: servitors of the white bourgeoisie.

39

Also it is necessary to break the Negro masses away from their leadership as a prerequisite to breaking them away from the bourgeois-parties. This leadership holds the Negro in the camp of bourgeois politics today just as did the Negro politicians and office holders in the Reconstruction Period; and with far less justification. It is necessary to effect this break if the Negro workers are to be won to support of the labor party. While the tendency of the Negroes in the union will be toward joining hands with the white workers for independent political action, such action will be greatly retarded if the Negroes remain under the influence of their present leadership, black and white.

40

The masses of the Negroes today are triply deluded. They are beguiled by white politicians, traduced by the industrial overlords and misled by the Negro leaders; lieutenants of the politico-economic general staff of the bourgeoisie. Herein lies the danger of uncritical support of organizations, even the best of them, fighting for democratic rights. Under the present leadership, white or Negro, the struggle is and will be carried on entirely within the framework of bourgeois democracy and capitalism. The program of this leadership does not include a struggle against capitalism, now or in the future. This in itself will throw the proletarian Negroes into conflict with their leaders and open the way for the propaganda of the Workers Party. It is the task of the Party therefore to steer the Negro proletarians to the labor movement and toward organic unity in class struggle with the white proletariat.

41

While the struggle for socialism and against capitalism is implicit in the demand for equality it is at the same time—in a sense—a struggle for immediate demands. This is especially true so far as the thinking of the masses of Negroes goes. This is demonstrated in the manner in which their demands are concretized. They make demands for jobs, for promotion to skilled classifications, for equality of treatment in the military service, against separate accommodations and against residential segregation. While even violent struggles may take place around such issues, the aim of the WP must be to lead the struggle for democratic rights out of these narrow confines just as the Party aims to do in the wider arena of the whole working class struggle.

42

The strategy and tactics of the revolutionaries must be to liquidate the ideological influence of the present Negro and white leadership of the Negro masses and to replace this leadership with a militant leadership at least moving in the direction of class consciousness. Concretely this could only be a leadership supplied from the trades unions or the WP.

44 The organized struggle of the Negroes for their democratic rights has a long and continuous history. Today as in the past there are a multitude of organizations, committees, commissions and groups concerned with this problem. The oldest and most outstanding of these organizations from the point of longevity and clarity of program and aim is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The program of the NAACP calls for the elimination of all the civil disabilities suffered by Negroes and their assimilation into the democratic set-up in the United States.

45 The National League on Urban Conditions Among Negroes took as its sphere of activity propaganda for the improvement of the Negro's industrial status.

46 The NAACP works in the field of civil rights. Its functions through propaganda, investigation the resort to the courts in cases where the legal and constitutional rights of Negroes have been violated.

47 The National League on Urban Conditions among Negroes took as its sphere of activity, propaganda for the improvement of the Negro's industrial status. The main purpose of this organization is to appeal to industrialists to recognize Negroes in the selection of workers both skilled and unskilled. The Urban League also operates in the field of housing and recreation.

48 The fight for democratic rights has been carried on also by numerous other organizations: Negro, white and mixed, such as the Future Outlook League of Ohio, the various inter-racial committees and commissions, commissions of the various church bodies and the Stalinist controlled organizations.

49 The dominant element in the NAACP and the Urban League are white: white petty-bourgeois and bourgeois liberals in the NAACP and a predominance of white so-called liberals from among the less reactionary elements of the white capitalists.

50 The Negro church and the fraternal organizations also concern themselves with the question of democratic rights. This is especially true of the Negro Elks where an equal rights committee is maintained.

51 All of these organizations today concern themselves primarily with questions raised by the war: that is matters of discrimination in the military service and in industry. All of their program and activities are proposals for the solution of the problem within the framework of bourgeois democracy and capitalist enterprise. Each of these organizations is pre-war and asks only that the violation of the Negro's constitutional rights be eliminated and that Negroes be given a chance to prove their "loyalty" to the country and his fitness to make a place in industry.

52 Concrete evidence that the mass of Negroes were not satisfied with the programs, procedure and 100 per cent pro-war attitude of the Negro and white leadership was the outspoken discontent and resentment which manifested itself in the formation of the March On Washington Movement, as well as in other significant events which demonstrated this trend. (The Lynn Case, Negro conscientious objectors to jim-crow, etc.)

53 The MOW was at first visualized as militant mass movement of protest against continued jim-crow and discrimination. The leaders of the MOW

however, with the exception of Randolph, being from the Negro petty-bourgeois with jobs to protect and prestige to maintain, soon deflected the movement away from its militant beginnings to a form of Ghandism called by Randolph "constitutional disobedience." The leadership announced a pro-war stand and called for "national unity." The militancy of the movement was sapped and today the MOW has all but passed from the scene.

54. The Communist Party, despite its pro-war stand and its complete reversal of its former position of militant leader of the struggles of the Negro, still maintains appreciable influence among Negroes. This is particularly noticeable in the trade union movement. Here where the CP has well-organized forces they have been able to corral hundreds of Negro proletarians.
55. This is a matter for the WP to give especial attention to in the future. The Negroes can be won away from the CP and its influence if the Party is able to accelerate its propaganda activity and expose the CP politically and organizationally.
56. The outstanding event among Negroes over the past 25 years is their entrance into the factories and the trades unions. Whereas 25 years ago there were only about 56,000 Negroes in the unions today there are over 500,000. This has occurred because of the organization of the basic and heavy industries by the CIO. They have risen in the unions and are increasingly assuming places of leadership. This has been facilitated by the stand of the CIO in taking the position that not only must the Negro be accorded equality of treatment in the union but that they have received equality of treatment from industry.
57. This activation of hundreds of thousands of Negroes in the labor movement is changing the whole complexion of the struggle for democratic rights and will in the future provided a new type of leadership even for the Negro organizations involved in this struggle.

C. THE ROLE OF THE WORKING CLASS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS.

58. Throughout history the main current in the struggle for democratic rights for the oppressed has been the organizations of the toilers. This holds no less today than for the past. Consequently the Negroes in the U.S. must lay their case before the trades unions. Not as outsiders seeking a united front but from the inside as an integral and integrated part of the labor movement. Here the Negro proletarians will be caught up in the basic struggles of labor, they will have opportunity to pose the question of democratic rights for the Negro as a part of the struggle for the emancipation of the whole working class. And here too for the first time Negroes will be consciously a component of active and organized class struggle.

59. The organized labor movement must join in this struggle of the Negro for democratic rights. This is imperative for the labor movement today: this herculean task of increasing class solidarity, of bringing intra-class peace in the ranks of the proletariat. This is a pre-requisite for the formation of the working class into a movement against the common oppressor. With such a step the organized labor movement can go a long way toward wiping out the blot placed on labor's escutcheon by the shabby and shameful treatment labor has accorded the Negro since emancipation. Furthermore giving help and assistance to the Negro can correctly be equated with the struggle of the white worker for the preservation and enlargement of his own freedom.

60. The white worker must take the lead and the offensive in the struggle for the Negro's democratic rights. This does not mean that the Negroes sit back and wait on the white workers. Already there has been far too much in-

difference on the part of Negroes in the matter of leading and pushing white workers into action in behalf of the Negroes. If they remain true to the great traditions of the world labor movement the white proletarians in the United States will not hold back and leave the brunt of the battle to those least able to carry the load. The white workers are strongly organized, they have had ages of experience and they are powerful. On the other hand, no matter how great their courage and determination, the Negroes are organizationally, financially and numerically weak in comparison with the white workers, and woefully and pitifully weak in the face of present day capitalism.

61. The Workers Party must point out to the white workers that they have in the past and still do occupy a preferential position based on the social degradation of the Negro. Over against the Negroes and climbing up on their backs, the white workers have become a sort of aristocracy of labor in this country. A labor movement thus divided against itself, shot through with distrust, suspicion and hatred can never hope to win its liberation from wage slavery or hold back the hordes of fascism that may appear one day to deepen the slavery of the whole American proletariat.

62. The struggle for democratic rights must become and remain an integral part of the class struggle in the U.S. Negroes can only attain the strength and confidence necessary to break through the thick walls of jim-crow to the degree that they are supported by and integrated into the working class and its organizations. To place the main burden of this fight on the Negroes separated from the white workers, or on Negro organizations, no matter how militant, outside the labor movement, is only to wish and dream and send the Negroes out to certain defeat.

63. The Workers Party will not be indifferent to the militancy of the Negro in his own behalf, neither will it denigrate his heroism. These things will be accorded their proper place as they deserve. But on the other hand the Party will not exalt the social, political and economic weakness of the Negro, nor be blind to the low economic status of the Negro. This is not the Marxian way nor the correct way to come to the aid of the Negro masses.

64. The demand of the WP for social, political and economic equality for Negroes is not directed primarily at the bourgeoisie. It is not merely a slogan for attracting Negroes to the Party. The slogan is addressed directly to the white proletariat: to the white workers in the organized labor movement. The Party says to the white workers that the Negroes have already initiated and carried on the struggle for their democratic rights against terrific opposition; even the opposition of white labor. It is now the duty and the responsibility of white labor to step out in front, take the lead and throw its full weight into the fight.

D. BLACK CHAUVINISM AND NEGRO NATIONALISM.

65. The WP is not unaware that Negroes have been indoctrinated with ideas of racial separation, racial sufficiency and racial autarchy. These dogmas have paraded under a banner labelled "race consciousness." The most extreme form of this promulgated by the advocates of black chauvinism or Negro nationalism.

66. The root evil of black chauvinism, as of all chauvinism, is disregard of class lines, class distinctions and class struggle. With the Negro today, this provides a base for the perpetuation of the present Negro leadership, making more difficult the integration of the Negro proletarians into the labor movement and thus leaving them the private prey of the bourgeoisie. The advocacy of black chauvinism is to say, in effect, that Negroes can win their battle alone, that they are sufficient unto themselves, or at least that they shall strive for such a consummation in the economic, political and social spheres.

67. We have said that not even the struggle for the democratic rights cannot be divorced or separated from class struggle. But this is what black chauvinism proposes to do. The theory of black chauvinism lumps the Negro proletarian masses together with the Negro compradore bourgeoisie and turns the struggle into a race struggle under the leadership of the Negro bourgeois and petty bourgeois. Black chauvinism, in practice, provides no way for the separation of the Negro working class from its reformist and reactionary black leadership. Black chauvinism provides no way for the revolutionary Negroes to separate themselves from the reactionary leadership and lead the Negro masses in militant struggles. The theory of black chauvinism builds an unscalable wall between the Negro workers and the white proletariat and perpetuates the present atomization of the working class.

68. In 1922, writing against the attitude of the white workers to the Negro, Comrade Trotsky said: "The fight against this policy must be taken up from different sides, and conducted on different lines. One of the most important branches of this conflict consists in enlightening the proletarian consciousness by awakening the feeling of human dignity and of revolutionary protest, among the black slaves of American capital. . This work can be carried out by self-sacrificing and politically educated revolutionary Negroes. Needless to say, the work is not to be carried on in a spirit of Negro chauvinism -- but in the spirit of solidarity of all exploited without consideration of color." (Quoted from M.S. "Communism and the Negro.")

69. While the Workers Party rejects all black chauvinist doctrines and conceptions, as incompatible with the principles of class struggle and revolutionary Marxism, the Party makes it clear that this is not a judgment against the righteous and justifiable anger of the Negro masses against their white oppressors, exploiters and calumniators. The Party will no more condemn the Negro masses for this attitude than it would condemn the Jews of Czarist Russia or of fascist Germany for lashing out against their detractors and oppressors. By the same token the Party will not condemn white workers who might vent their wrath in the most violent manner against the police, the city jail or a particularly vicious employer. If the occasion should arise for a depressed group of white gentile workers to express anger and hatred at Jewish landlords or Jewish capitalist employers with a record of extreme oppression we should certainly not condemn them as white chauvinist or anti-Semites. In the same way we do not talk of black chauvinism when Negroes express similar sentiments or behave in a similar manner.

70. The Party understands these manifestations of anger and reprisal among all the oppressed. The WP will seek to guide this indignation of the exploited and downtrodden of all races and groups into organized manifestation of class struggle and orient them into effective class solidarity revolutionary channels. This is not the program of chauvinism, white or black.

71. It is particularly imperative that this attempt be made in the case of the Negro in the U.S. because if the Party cannot guide the Negroes into harmonious relations with the white workers the result might well be fratricidal blood bath that would defeat the proletarian revolution.

72. In the place of the dissemination of black chauvinist notions it is the duty and responsibility of the revolutionary party to win the Negro and white workers to an appreciation of proletarian dignity, honor and morality. It is the further duty of revolutionaries to set their faces grimly against every manifestation of injustice perpetrated against any section of the working class, no matter from whatever source the offense may come. Therefore while we temper our judgment of Negroes when they strike out blindly against white workers, we

will not glorify such acts. We seek to understand them, to explain them to the white workers and seek their aid in removing the causes behind such outbursts. We must do this even though our act brings the Party into conflict with the opinions of the White and Negro workers. To act otherwise would make mockery of our proletarian revolutionary principles and be a blow against the proletarian revolution.

73. In contradistinction to black chauvinist notions the WP will support and in its own way attempt to encourage Negroes to respect in life those aspects of their past which are significant for progress as well as emulation of the Negro martyrs who gave their sweat, blood and their lives for Negro liberation. We see these struggles, and so say to Negroes, as one more segment of the ages long struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor. This is particularly relevant in the case of the black leaders of the slave rebellions; those militant Negroes who through their experience had assimilated the lesson, albeit in a primitive way, that slavery nor any other form of oppression by a mast class could be eliminated by peaceful means. In this very crude way these Negro slaves had absorbed the simple meaning of the class struggle.

74. It is necessary for the WP to emphasize to Negroes especially, that the real continuers of the work of the pre-~~emancipation~~ militants were the Negroes of Reconstruction who attempted trade union organization. These men were a hundred times more correct than were the Negro politicians and office holders of the day, who made the freed slaves an appendage of the Republican Party. The Negroes who stand today in the line of succession are the militant Negroes of the labor movement and the Negroes of the revolutionary political movement. These are the real and rightful inheritors of the tradition of Attucks, and Gabriel and Tugman.

THE NEGRO AS POTENTIAL REVOLUTIONARY FORCE.

75. The Workers Party is fully aware that the Negro in the U.S. is a force of definite revolutionary potentiality. This political appraisal flows from the proletarian and semi-proletarian character of the Negro race, his role and place in capitalist society, his continuous expression of resentment against his oppression and his tendency to enter into alliance with the other workers and sink his racial identity in the general struggles of the proletariat. It must be stressed over and over to the Negroes that the full value of his potentialities can only be realized in connection with the struggles of the white workers; with the black and white proletarians fused in the heat of the class struggle.

76. With these conceptions in mind the WP girds itself for winning the Negro proletarians away from the influence of the bourgeoisie, to the WP and to Marxism. Through the struggle for democratic rights, through the struggle in unions for economic justice we will strive to attract the weight of the Negro masses to socialism and to enthusiastic support of the Workers State.

ON SELF-DETERMINATION.

77. Despite all the efforts of the WP, the Negroes in the U.S. might conceivably express the demand for separation and the establishment of their own nation. This demand is implicit in the theory of black chauvinism. We believe on what we hold to be sound grounds that such a demand is unlikely. Considering the whole history of the Negroes objectively: his constant agitation to become integrated into the social, political and economic life of the nation; there is no cogent reason to believe that the masses of Negroes would want to risk existence in any society less democratic than the proletarian state. It is extremely

unlikely that the oppressed Negroes, after observing the struggles of the working class for freedom and after being participants in that struggle, would choose to separate themselves from those who had fought and died for social, economic and political equality for the Negroes.

78. All the manifest tendencies of Negroes today, especially the proletarians, are in the other direction. As the regular Negro proletarians and the new Negro wage-earners enter the factories and take their places in the trade union struggles they reveal a marked tendency away from separation and all ideas of racial separatism. It would be strange indeed, and the Negro would be a strange phenomenon if this were not so. It is the bounden duty of the WP to further this development to complete integration and assimilation.

79. However, if despite our efforts the Negroes should demand political independence, the WP guided by the Bolshevik position on self-determination, would approve such a course; provided however that such a course did not violate wider principles of workers democracy and provided also that such a demand was not made under conditions that would jeopardize the existence of the Workers State, and throw the Negroes themselves, defenseless into the clutches of counter-revolutionary imperialist forces.

80. The theory and politics of self-determination apply primarily and specifically to nations and groups with well-defined national characteristics. Any scientific criterion for the concept "nation" must be able to show that the people to whom the term is applied have a common language and a separate territory. They must be voluntarily bound to this territory and have developed a body of distinguishable mores and traditions. This is to say that there must be something that can be called a separate culture. This is not the case with the Negro in the U.S.

81. Whatever position the WP might take in the future when a concrete demand for self-determination arose, we are not now and will not be advocates of self-determination. To be an advocate of self-determination is to become an advocate of a subtle but vicious form of jim-crow and segregation. In essence it is a recrudescence of the colonization plans of Civil War days.

82. We are and remain advocates of the unity of the working class: the fellowship of all the proletarians in the class struggle, the gathering together of all the working class struggle, the gathering together of all the working class for the coming assault on capitalism and the establishment of the Workers State. This is our aim and the Party resolves to hold steadfast and win the Negroes to our side.

THE NEGRO IS A RACIAL MINORITY

83. The theory that the Negro in the United States is a nation was first promulgated in this country by the CP after the meeting of the Stalinized 6th Congress. (A few Negro charlatans had been talking for years about Ethiopia stretching out her hand some day in the future.) It was at this Congress that the Stalinists devised their fantastic slogan of self-determination in the Black Belt. In order to give foundation to this opportunist jim-crow scheme the Comintern declared the Negro a nation within the framework of a definition of "nation" which had been given by Stalin. Stalin said that "a nation is an historically developed lasting identity of language territory, economic life, and psychology manifesting itself in identity of culture." The American Stalinists had great difficulty in making this fit the Negro in the U.S. but their theoreticians finally emerged with the following gem.

84. "It was during this period (1877-1917, DC) that the Black Belt took on all the characteristics of a nation. A common language, territory, culture, traditions had already been achieved. These continued: the territory of the Black Belt remained a territory of Negro majority, despite the migrations to the North. There now developed a common economic life; the Negro developed market relations and class differentiation among itself. It now became possible for a Negro, to hire a Negro, fire a Negro, buy from a Negro, sell to a Negro."

85. The only designation for the Negro in the U.S. that even approaches anything that can be called scientific accuracy is to say that he is a racial minority or population. There are other racial minorities and populations: e.g. The Jews. The Negro is the largest of these racial minorities and the most oppressed and exploited.

THE STRUGGLE FOR PROLETARIAN UNITY

86. The big task before the WP is to seize on the opportunities presented by the plight of the Negro and his willingness to struggle against his condition, as a platform for revolutionary propaganda. Negroes must be recruited to the Party. They must be prepared inside the Party for political and organizational leadership. Not just for leadership among Negroes, although this is of the greatest urgency, but for Party leadership and for leadership in the proletarian organizations. The Party must disavow every manifestation, within its ranks or out, which in any degree whatsoever tends to relegate Negroes a separate status or function as a race. Properly motivated and organized as a component of the politics of class struggle and revolution the Party will be saved from mistakes in this activity.

87. The WP as a Marxist Party is interested at all times in the political and organizational conquest of the masses. The principles of Marxism are suitable no less for the Negro than for the white proletarians. The Party stands on the threshold of great opportunities today. So far as the Negroes are concerned these opportunities are unparalleled in the history of the country. Negro membership in the labor movement has passed the half million

mark. Negroes are more union conscious than ever before. Even the petty-bourgeois Negro organizations now support the labor movement. This includes the Urban League which during the Great Steel Strike of 1919 played the role of scab herder for U.S. Steel Corporation.

88. The white workers show a great tolerance and more evidence of class solidarity than ever before. The whole industrial union movement provides a support for the economic advancement of the Negro than he has ever experienced in the United States.

89. The decline of capitalist society culminating in the Second World Imperialist War, during which Negroes still find themselves subjected to the grossest social and economic indignities offers opportunities to the WP that facilitates political propaganda among Negroes. Capitalist decline with its prolonged crisis, dislocations in industry and agriculture has been particularly severe on the Negro worker. The war has brought disillusionment and opposition from legions of Negroes. Here too is the opportunity to drive a wedge between the black proletarians and the petty-bourgeois black social-patriots.

90. The WP takes unto itself the responsibility for joining with all those forces genuinely striving for proletarian unity and intra-class peace in the U.S. Beside the white heroes of the labor movement we place the black martyrs. It is for us; the revolutionaries to lead the way; to make the white worker and the black worker see and understand that the time has now come for the struggle to be joined.

91. Unity of the black and white proletarians is a prerequisite for proletarian victory in the U.S. The whole superstructure of economic and political activity must be built on this foundation. Any other foundation is a base of sand, any other propaganda is a hollow promise and a clanking cymbal. Without this conjuncture of forces capitalism may well prove to be an irreducible fortress; holding on until the advent of fascism. This is especially true of the South; a place of the tensest hatreds and open sores. This section could become a shambles of inter-racial strife; the Negroes seeking revenge and the white proletarians going over to the rotten southern bourgeoisie in self-defense.

92. The Negro militants have the opportunity not only to lead the black proletarians into class struggle but they can be a force for inspiring the most enlightened white workers to greater militancy and fortitude.

93. The Party must stand prepared and ready always to take its proper place in the line of fire when the Negroes are under attack and when any of the oppressed are under fire. We direct our appeal especially to organized labor; they are our allies. We must be alert and ready to move against every racial and class barrier and obstruction. We must win over the white and black workers, arm them with our program and principles and inspire them to march arm in arm against the common foe.

94, The Third National Convention of the Workers Party resolves to carry on political work among Negroes in the spirit of this resolution and grounded in the principles herein set forth. The convention instructs the incoming National Committee to prosecute this political and organizational activity with all vigor consonant with the resources of the Party and in harmony with the line of policy set forth in this resolution.

David Coelidge
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