

A Reply to A Comrade

By CYRIL BRIGGS.

JOHN A LINDEMANN, a worker of Lemiah, Idaho, takes the *Daily Worker* to task on several points.

The *Daily Worker*, at all times welcomes constructive criticism from workers. We especially welcome criticism from workers who, like Comrade Lindemann, are not members of the Party but are sympathetic towards the communist program. In this case, however, Comrade Lindemann happens to be wrong on every point he raises. In this article I will deal with the two main points of his letter.

He writes "it passes my understanding how you fellows can shout about white chauvinism and Jim Crowism and then come out with such statements as made by Cyril Briggs on page 2, column 1, of the *Daily Worker* for Dec. 31, 'for the right of the Negro majorities in the South to determine and control their own government and its relations to the United States and other governments.'"

He then goes on to reveal that the real basis for his failure to understand this simple principle of the right of the Negro majorities in the "Black Belt" to have majority control of the government of that section lies in the fact that he himself has a chauvinistic reaction to the idea that Negroes should have the right to govern whites: 'If you want to talk about putting white and black on an equal basis stick to that and not claim that the blacks should decide and control where they are in the majority.' In other words, don't talk about real equality!

There is no ambiguity in the Communist demand for the right of self-determination. The Communist International has quite definitely pointed out that "it would not be right of self-determination in our sense if the Negroes in the Black Belt had the right of self-determination only in cases which concerned EXCLUSIVELY the Negroes and did not affect the whites, because the most important cases arising here are bound to affect the Negroes as well as the whites. First of all, true right of self-determination means that the Negro majority and not the white minority in the entire territory of the administratively united Black Belt exercises the right of administering governmental, legislative and judicial authority."

This does not mean that the white minority in the Black Belt should not participate in the government and be protected in its rights as a minority. It does mean, however, the overthrow of the present class rule in the Black Belt whereby all power is concentrated in the hands of the white bourgeoisie and landlords, who appoint all officers, dispose of public property, determine taxes, make the laws and control the government.

Nothing less than the right of the Negroes to control the government where they are in the majority would be putting Negroes and whites on an equal basis. If Lindemann is honest in

his support of the Communist demand for full equality for the Negro masses, he must of necessity support their right to exercise control of government where they are in the majority, whether it be in Africa, the West Indies, or in the Black Belt section of the South.

Lindemann's second major error lies in his peculiar notion that the workers of the Soviet Union should not defend the revolution and the proletarian dictatorship against its imperialist enemies and their wrecking tools in the Soviet Union. In typical bourgeois manner he objects to Maxim Gorky's exhortation of the prostitute bourgeois intellectuals who signed the protest against the sentence of the proletarian court on the wreckers. He naively questions whether these signers really sympathized with the saboteurs and evidently wishes us to believe that their motive was purely humanitarian—these bourgeois writers who are silent on the lynching terror in the United States and have no word of condemnation for the fascist attacks of the United States Government and the employers on the working-class. He evidently is not aware of the notorious servile role of the bourgeois writers as defenders of the capitalist system.

Lindemann would muzzle the angry protests of the international working-class and its vehement demands for the punishment of the wreckers who sought to undermine the Five Year Plan of Socialist construction in the Soviet Union. "Why shout about lynching in this country and demand lynching in Russia," he asks. As if the saboteurs had not been convicted out of their own mouths, by their own shame-faced confessions made publicly in the proletarian court upon their realization of the utter failure of their wrecking plots against the Five Year Plan.

Such an attitude is incomprehensible on the part of a worker. One can understand the chagrin of the bourgeoisie before the iron determination of the victorious proletariat of the Soviet Union to defend its gains against all class enemies, internal and external. This is understandable, since it is the aim of the bourgeoisie to disarm the revolution in preparation for their intervention plans.

Does Lindemann intend consciously to support this aim? Would he have the proletariat ignore the lessons of the Paris Commune?

Lindemann expresses an intention to join the Communist Party. But his present attitude negates even the class struggle. He is opposed to violence. Lenin dealt with this view in the following statement:

"There is war and war. There is war—adventure to satisfy the interests of the dynasty, the appetites of robber bands, the aims of the heroes of capitalist greed. There is war—and this is the only lawful war in capitalist society—against the domination and exploiters of the masses. Only the Utopians and Phillistines principally condemn such a war."