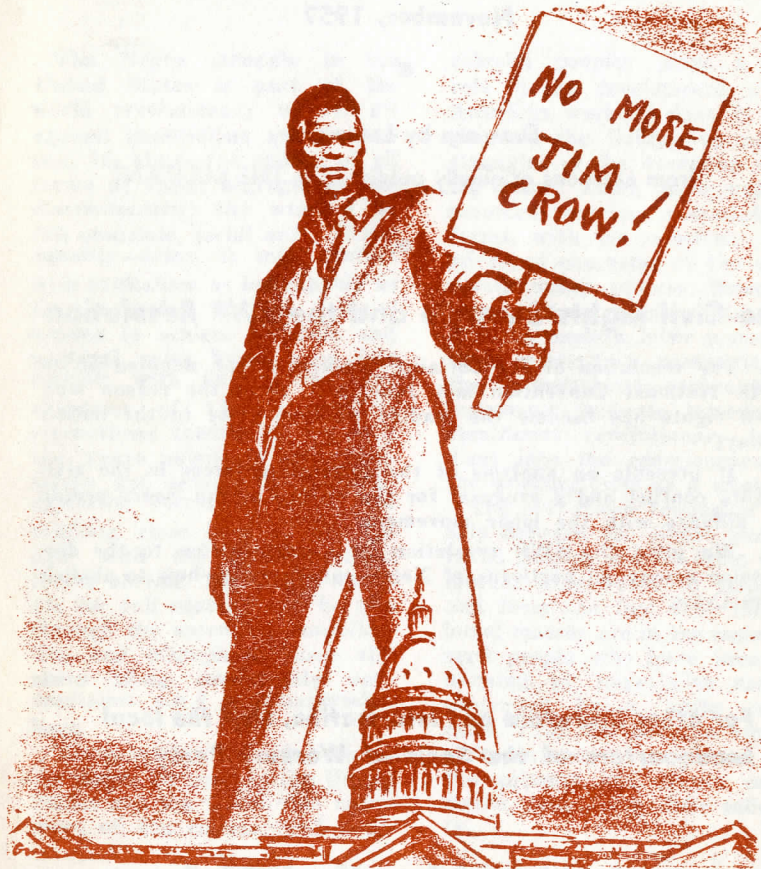


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The Class-Struggle Road to Negro Equality



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The Civil Rights Struggle and the SWP Resolution

The resolution of the Socialist Workers Party, adopted at its 17th National Convention last June, sets forth the reason why civil rights has become the leading political issue in the nation today.

It presents an analysis of the contending forces in the civil rights conflict and a program for the victory of the Negro people in alliance with the labor movement.

We print the SWP resolution as a contribution to the discussion among all partisans of Negro equality over how to abolish Jim Crow.

For other literature and information, visit the local headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party:

Printed in the United States of America

The Class-Struggle Road to Negro Equality

Resolution Adopted By The Socialist Workers Party

The Negro struggle in the United States is part of the world revolutionary upsurge against imperialism and capitalism. Its aims—the ending of all forms of racial segregation and discrimination; the winning of full economic, social and political equality—bring it into conflict with capitalism as inescapably as the struggles of the colonial masses to achieve self-rule and national unity bring them into conflict with imperialism. The character of these conflicts strengthens tendencies among the Negro people to ally themselves not only with the anti-capitalist forces at home, the working class first of all, but also with the anti-imperialist forces abroad. The Negro struggle for full equality will be won through the extension, consolidation and triumph of these alliances along consistently anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist lines.

The growing solidarity between the Negro struggle in the United States and the world-wide movement of the colonial and semi-

colonial peoples plays a vital role in the development of the American working class. It foreshadows the linking up of the struggles of the American working class, which have not yet assumed conscious anti-capitalist forms, with the relatively more advanced character of the world revolutionary process. Since the Negroes have become integrated into the modern labor movement their greater receptivity to the international anti-capitalist movement tends to introduce a significant revolutionary ingredient into the consciousness of the working class as a whole.

The ever-closer feeling of kinship between the Negro and colonial peoples derives from their mutual experiences in struggle, and from the fact that the colonial masses are in the main colored people who have been dominated by imperialist nations controlled by a white ruling class. Thus the struggle against white supremacy permeates both the colonial and Negro movements, reinforcing their solidarity.

A Majority of Mankind

In addition the colored peoples in the colonial and semi-colonial spheres constitute a majority of mankind. By making common

cause with them, the Negro people help to reduce the handicap of being a minority of the nation. Along these general lines

both movements derive mutual strength from their separate struggles.

Colonial support to the Negro struggle is dramatized by official invitations extended to Rev. M. L. King, president of the Montgomery Improvement Association, to attend celebrations in Ghana and India. Solidarity with the colonial revolution is manifested through Negro support of the Egyptian and Algerian liberation struggles; and by the lukewarm to cool reception of the Eisenhower Middle East doctrine in the Negro press.

Their own bitter experiences with a President who refuses to speak out in support of civil rights in this country gives the Negro people good reason to challenge the democratic pretensions of U.S. capitalism's foreign policy. Experience likewise impels them to challenge the concept that imperialist wars are fought for democracy. They learned that lesson well in both World War II and the Korean War. In fact their wartime lessons have accentuated and deepened the grievances of the Negro people.

While they were supposed to be fighting for democracy, according to the capitalist propaganda, young Negroes in the armed forces got a large dose of Jim Crow in uniform. When those who survived the slaughter were demobilized they were forced back into hateful civilian

patterns of segregation and discrimination. Meanwhile in Southern military camps Northern Negroes got a clearer picture of conditions in that region where racial prejudice has its deepest roots. Southern Negroes gained new ideas, fresh hope from their Northern comrades in uniform. Both rubbed shoulders to a degree with the peoples of the world, broadening their thinking, impelling them toward greater militancy in the fight for equality. Once demobilized, young Negro veterans took their place in the forefront of the civil rights struggle.

On the home front the colored people have implicitly tended to reject the notion that the imperialist war was their war. Militant elements began to look instead for opportunities to use the war as a means to push ahead a bit in their own battle for civil rights. In 1941 the March-on-Washington movement sprang up, receiving such strong mass support that the Roosevelt government felt compelled to make temporary concessions toward an FEPC. The 1943 Harlem outbreak sharpened the mass pressure, forcing some further concretization toward an FEPC in New York state policy. Consciousness in the Negro struggle had begun to subordinate the war aims of imperialism to the democratic aspirations of the colored people.

Negroes in Industry

The civil rights movement gained momentum from the rise in industrial employment for Negroes forced on the capitalists by the needs of the war economy. Across the decade from 1940 to 1950 official statistics showed a sharp rise for the country as

a whole in the employment of non-whites in manufacturing. Where 1 out of 9 non-white workers had been employed in manufacture in 1940, the ratio had risen by 1950 to about 1 out of 5. The artificially stimulated economy of the cold war has en-

abled the colored workers to hold and even expand their foothold in industry. Figures for 1952 showed the above ratio climbing toward 1 out of 4.

This upward trend in industrial employment for colored workers spurred a vast wave of Negro migration from the countryside into the cities of the South and into the more highly industrialized regions elsewhere in the country. Over the 1940-1950 census decade the number of Negroes outside the South rose nearly 60 percent, from 2,960,000 to 4,600,000. The migratory trend toward the main industrial centers particularly toward the war-stimulated West Coast industrial regions, is strikingly revealed by the 1950 figures. For example, in ten years the Negro population of Los Angeles had tripled and in the Oakland-San Francisco area it had increased tenfold.

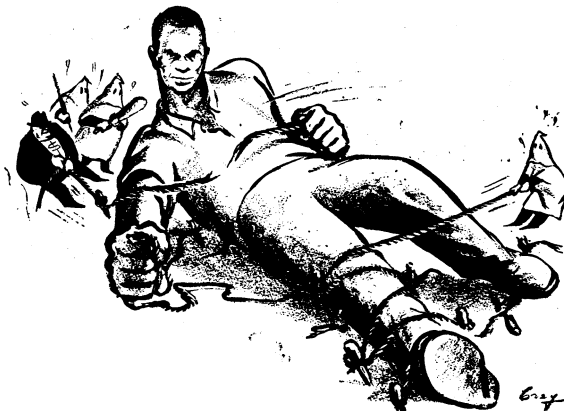
Although more deeply assimilated into industry, the Negro workers still face discrimination on the job. In the cities of the North and West, as in the South, the rapidly-growing colored population also remains generally segregated in housing, usually under slum conditions at high rents. In community life they face open or hypocritical discrimination in various forms. They are

united by a burning desire to break out of this vicious circle.

The migrations of recent years have greatly strengthened the Negro movement in the fight for civil rights. People leaving the South have been largely rural elements who had been dispersed across the farming communities. They lived under deplorable economic conditions, faced with white supremacy in its worst forms and were therefore unable to mobilize themselves for effective struggle in defense of their rights. Their new life in the North and West finds them concentrated in industrial cities, integrated into large, compact Negro communities already well advanced in the struggle for equality.

With younger and more enterprising elements predominating the migratory wave, the transformation in their social consciousness has been unusually rapid. Their big contribution to the strengthening of the Negro community has in turn given new weight and fresh impetus to the civil rights struggle. The mass pressures reflected in the militancy of the Negro press and the mass response when called to action by their leaders testify to this fact. Most immediately significant in the North and

The Awakening Giant



West has been the increased Negro participation in political life. The rise in the Negro vote is changing the political balance of power in the general elections and has pushed the civil rights question to the fore as a national political issue. Thus the migrations have resulted in the strengthening of the Southern Negro struggle through the medium of national politics.

The political impact of the Negro struggle compelled the Truman Democrats to make a demagogic bid for the Negro vote in the 1948 elections at the cost of a split with the Dixiecrats. When the white supremacists then began to shift their support to the Republicans the Democratic Party sought to bury the civil rights issue in a bid for unity with its Southern wing. As a result the Republicans registered a significant gain in Negro votes, especially in the 1956 elections. This situation has stiffened competition between the capitalist

parties for Negro support and may lead to some minor improvements in the federal civil rights laws. If so, the objective of both the Democrats and Republicans will be to seek a maximum of credit for a minimum of action. Neither party has the slightest intention of pressing for decisive measures to enforce minority rights.

Despite the political shell game of the capitalist politicians, the pressures from the civil rights movement, coupled with the diplomatic pressures arising from the colonial revolution, have compelled a series of capitalist concessions. These range from the wartime FEPC, through desegregation of the armed forces, to the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation. Along with this latter concession has come significant new evidence that it is impossible to secure full Negro equality through reliance on the capitalist government.

The White Citizens Councils

Announcement of the school desegregation decision led to open defiance of the Supreme Court by the white supremacists. The White Citizens Councils came into being as a new instrument to combine legal and extra-legal acts of racial repression. Recent estimates place the total membership of the Councils around 350,000 in all Southern states. This racist movement has been openly mobilized by the Southern Democratic politicians. The Southern press has given general support to its white supremacist attack on the Negro people.

The Councils have their greatest strength in rural and small-town areas where poverty, lack of education, bigotry and deep-dyed patterns of prejudice lend

themselves to the incitement of racial antagonisms. These rural forces have been used by the capitalist politicians to help impose conformity with Jim-Crow policies on the white population in the cities, including the white working class. Southern whites who sympathize with the Negro people have with few exceptions avoided open manifestations of support. The exceptions often involve individual acts of heroism, usually followed by white-supremacist reprisals.

Throughout the Deep South the legal arm of the White Citizens Councils, operating at the state and local government levels, has acted to checkmate racial integration and to intimidate and victimize the Negro people. Since

the 1954 Supreme Court decision over 100 new segregation laws have been enacted in Southern states. The Georgia legislature has demanded impeachment of six U.S. Supreme Court judges. Reverting to the old states' rights position of the slave holders, the white supremacists contend that a state may interpose its sovereignty against "unconstitutional" federal intervention. Laws have been passed aimed at barring Negroes from resort to federal court action in defense of their civil rights.

In several states the NAACP has been officially outlawed. Demands have been raised that the federal government put the NAACP on its witch-hunting "subversive" list. Legal frame-ups against Negro freedom fighters have been perpetrated in the state and local courts. An equally potent weapon to preserve Jim Crow domination is the growing use of economic pressure—cancellation of credit, insurance, licenses; discharge of workers and teachers—used against all who sign or show sympathy for suits requesting court action to desegregate schools, protect the right to vote, etc.

At the same time the extra-legal arm of the White Citizens Councils has conducted a typical Ku Klux Klan campaign of terror. Arson, bombing, shooting, beating, lynching have been unleashed against the Negro people and their white sympathizers. This terrorism is designed to prevent Negroes from organizing in defense of their rights, from acting to break down segregation and discrimination, from exercising their right to vote. It is also directed against whites sympathetic to the Negro people.

In the face of open white-

supremacist defiance of the Supreme Court and the campaign of terror against the Negro people, the federal government has done little or nothing to enforce the law or to punish the white-supremacist thugs. As a rule, official action to desegregate public schools has been undertaken only where there is a relatively small colored population. These actions have been confined primarily to the border states, leaving the Deep South virtually untouched. The leaders of both the Democratic and Republican parties have acted only insofar as they felt compelled to do so under mass pressure. Even then they have done as little as possible, hoping to appease the colored masses through promises of future action, without actually doing much to make desegregation a living reality on the social scene.

The Negro people refuse to accept the go-slow policy of the capitalist politicians. They have responded to the 1954 Supreme Court decision by a new mass upsurge in their struggle for full equality and in defense of their very lives against white-supremacist terror. The 1955 lynch-murder of 14-year-old Emmett Louis Till in Mississippi set off a great wave of mass protest actions in the cities of the North and West. These demonstrations of Negro solidarity, militancy and mass power made the Till case a major issue in the national press and aroused widespread sympathy among whites. This mass sympathy and support in the North and West made the Southern Negroes feel they had allies. They became inspired to throw their own weight into the scales through mass action to combat segregation, discrimination, brutality.

Hard on the heels of the Till



demonstrations a mass struggle exploded right in the heart of the deep South. The Negro people of Montgomery, Alabama, solidly united and 50,000 strong, set out to smash segregation on the city buses. They were opening a fight to win full equality in all spheres, starting where they had the strongest initial tactical advantage — the bus boycott. They hit hard with their economic power as the main users of the buses: demanding seating on a first-come, first-served basis; courteous treatment; and the hiring of colored drivers on routes in predominantly Negro neighborhoods.

The Democratic Party politicians in local government struck back through a mass trial of the boycott leaders, aiming to behead and crush the new mass organization, the Montgomery Improvement Association. But the colored people of the city turned out for the trial in mass to show solidarity with their victimized

leaders. Defense witnesses poured out the bitter grievances of a long-suffering people for the whole world to hear. Although Rev. King was convicted, the trial was actually turned into a successful counter-attack on the white supremacists.

Meanwhile the MIA launched an attack in the federal courts on the Alabama bus segregation law. They kept the boycott pressure on throughout the court deliberations, showing tremendous staying power in a year-long siege. The mass pressure speeded the judicial proceedings, resulting in a U.S. Supreme Court decision last December knocking out the Alabama law in question. When the court order came through the Negro people acted to enforce it by returning to the buses on a non-segregated basis.

Similar enforcement of the court order was undertaken at Tallahassee, Florida, where a bus

boycott had been started following the Montgomery action. Test demonstrations were carried through in Birmingham, Atlanta and other Southern cities in order to initiate court action against local bus segregation laws. At an Atlanta meeting 97 Negro leaders gathered to form a Southern Leaders Conference with Rev. King as president. The Conference proclaimed its intention to fight on until all forms of racial discrimination have been abolished. President Eisenhower was asked to come into the South and publicly state his position on the civil rights issue. When he refused the Southern Leaders Conference at a later meeting in New Orleans proposed a mass pilgrimage to Washington to demand action from the federal government.

Beginning with the Montgomery bus boycott, the Southern Negro movement assumed a vanguard role in the civil rights struggle and changed the course of events. Skillfully mobilized by able leaders with clear aims, the colored masses intervened against the White Citizens Councils, confronting them for the first time with a head-on fight. Capitalist politicians of all stripes were compelled to reshape their

policies under the impact of mass pressure. Throughout the Negro movement the ranks became newly inspired; strategic and tactical policies, organizational forms and leadership patterns have been affected.

The Montgomery action broke through the limitations long imposed on the civil rights movement by the national leadership of the NAACP. Distrust and deliberate restraint of mass action has been a central component of official NAACP policy. At the national level the basic policy has been to seek gradual extension of civil rights through reliance on the courts, law enforcement agencies and legislative bodies, working toward that end through the medium of the capitalist political parties.

Membership participation in the local NAACP branches has been more or less confined to fund raising, legwork in support of national policies dictated from the top and local activities around civic reform movements. Few workers could be activated in this environment. With some exceptions, the movement remained essentially middle class in its active core, particularly outside the South, thus facilitating middle class domination of the leadership nationally.

Go Beyond the NAACP

The NAACP policy of discouraging mass action led in the North and West to sporadic upsurges of struggle in independent organizational form. In the South, however, such partial, episodic mass actions could not be undertaken. For the Southern Negroes to win a mass struggle it was necessary for them to propel a whole people into motion, an effort not to be lightly undertaken due to the peril of savage reprisals if defeated.

They therefore sought maximum utilization of the NAACP as an instrument of struggle, imparting to it unusual regional strength that added to its specific weight nationally. In addition NAACP initiative in the proceedings that led to the school desegregation decision brought great prestige to the organization and its national leadership.

Yet the fundamental flaw in NAACP policy—reliance on the capitalist government to secure

civil rights—has repeatedly upset its organizational control over the insurgent Negro masses.

With the rise of the CIO, the colored workers sought to adapt to the civil rights movement the methods of struggle they had learned in the unions—boycotts, picketing, protest demonstrations—and to secure union support of their efforts. Various local organizations sprang into being as instruments of mass action, usually around some specific issue. Across the years such local movements have arisen and then disappeared, only to arise again in somewhat different form.

Evidence of the rebellious mood permeating the ranks of the colored people goes beyond the various small-scale local actions of recent years. The 1941 March-on-Washington movement evoked a broad mass response to a protest action aimed squarely at the capitalist government. The 1943 Harlem outbreak reflected a similar mass mood, as did the spontaneous resistance to the anti-Negro pogrom in Detroit the same year.

In 1955, when the conservative Negro leaders announced meetings to protest the Till murder, the colored masses of the North and West filled the halls to overflowing. Unionized Negro workers in Chicago forced extension of the protest through a picket line at the City Hall, adding to the bill of particulars local acts of violence against colored people.

More alarmed than inspired by the vigorous mass response to their call for a protest, the conservative Negro leaders sought to discourage further mass action, hoping to keep the movement confined within the general framework of reliance on the government. They were not to

succeed because the necessary conditions for mass action in the South had now matured. The colored people of Montgomery were able to catch up with the general trend toward militant struggle and in doing so they pushed the whole movement towards a higher stage of development.

The Montgomery Improvement Association was the mobilization of an entire Southern Negro community in action. It united the workers, women, youth, professional and middle class elements more effectively than any previous organization had done, enabling them all to contribute to the common cause. The main thrust toward organized action, however, came from the working class section of the movement.

At every stage the struggle revealed the presence of an able worker leadership schooled in the arts of mass organization. Typifying this worker leadership is Mr. E. D. Nixon, treasurer of the MIA and a veteran union and civil rights leader. His long training and experience were no



E. D. Nixon

doubt reflected in the keen sense of timing with which the growing mass militancy became crystallized into concrete mass action.

It took a skilled hand to act decisively while the masses seethed with anger over the arrest of Mrs. Rosa Parks; to swiftly mobilize a broadly representative leading cadre from the Negro population as a whole; and to hammer out a clearly defined perspective around which to summon the masses to battle. The record shows that these things were done, and done consciously, during the first days of the Montgomery action.

As the boycott settled into a siege further evidence revealed

the presence of experienced mass organizers. The car pool alone was a masterpiece of organization, involving vehicles, drivers, dispatchers, mechanics and very substantial service facilities. Strike techniques appeared in the form of an organized relief system, publicity and legal defense mechanisms and systematic appeals for material aid. The regular mass meetings to keep the ranks informed of developments and to help sustain their fighting morale are in the best tradition of militant labor struggle. Among the most significant features is the generally democratic structure of the movement.

Use Economic Weapons

One of the boycott demands called for employment of Negro bus drivers on certain lines. This indicates perception of the need to relate class problems of the Negro workers to the general civil rights struggle. Sensitivity to the economic interests of the masses is further indicated by the MIA decision to organize a credit union. This step, offering a measure of protection against white supremacist economic reprisals, followed the boycott victory. Thus it implies determination to continue with organized mass action in the fight for full equality.

High potential for the continuation of policies involving mass participation is also implied by the predominance of youth in the MIA leadership. Throughout history the youth have given vigor, sweep and boldness to movements deeply rooted in the masses. This spirit, infused into the struggle by the worker youth, imparted militancy to the young lawyers and ministers. As the young ministers responded

bravely to the mass upsurge, the worker organizers pushed them forward as public spokesmen. Several factors were involved: the traditional role of the church in the civil rights struggle; the educational advantages derived from their ministerial training; the time they can give to the movement without need for personal financial aid.

The attention given to the ministers by the press has created a partly distorted picture of the MIA. Despite the religious tones and language imparted by the ministers in the leadership, it is not primarily a religious movement. Because of peculiar historical circumstances, segregation especially, the church has come to be a social, cultural and political as well as religious center for the Negro people. When the boycott struggle began the church was there at hand, available as a convenient meeting place and organizational center. In addition, its character as a religious institution afforded a measure of protection against

white-supremacist violence, although the night-prowling white supremacists have not hesitated to hurl bombs at Negro churches.

The MIA mass meetings were called "prayer meetings," but they were not at all conventional religious gatherings, for the "prayers" were recitations of grievances, demands and pledges to do something about them in an organized and militant fashion. The theme of "non-violence," heavily stressed by the ministers, found an echo in the ranks, chiefly for its tactical significance. The Negro people have no reason to precipitate acts of violence. They are merely demanding the civil rights to which they are legally entitled under the U.S. Constitution. All the violence comes from the white supremacists who seek through terror to restrain the colored people from fighting for their rights. Advocacy of "non-violence" therefore meets with favor as a means to protest against the terrorism aimed at the Negro freedom fighters.

The program of Rev. King and some of the other ministers is a confusing and conflicting combination of mystical-pacifist slogans and militant-practical actions. On the one hand they preach a doctrine—"love your enemy," "turn the other cheek"—



Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

that impedes rather than promotes the mobilization of forces to fight Jim Crow, invites collaboration with the enemy and facilitates his continued domination. On the other hand they have supported and led a courageous mass struggle against that enemy.

Passive Resistance?

"Passive resistance" is a formula that can be filled with different kinds of content. In Gandhi's hands it was used to paralyze and demoralize mass action at crucial moments. In Montgomery, however, even though the ministers praise Gandhi, the accent so far has been on struggle, and the boycott was active all the way. The ministers appear to have been accepted by

the members of the MIA as leaders in the struggle not because they preached passivity but because, reflecting the sentiments of the members, they preached resistance—collective resistance. The distinguishing feature of the Montgomery movement is not pacifist declarations of some of its leaders but its use of mass action to fight Jim Crow. Its future depends on the continued

use and extension of such action.

One product of the Montgomery struggle was the formation of the Southern Leaders Conference. This opens new possibilities for the development of mass struggle methods on a broader basis than the bus boycott. It implies the necessity for greater intervention by the Southern Negroes themselves, and therefore represents a differentiation from the conservative policies of the national Negro leaders who cling to their reliance on the capitalist government to bring about civil rights reforms.

One of the first steps of the SLC was the call for a mass pilgrimage to Washington on May 17, 1957, to put pressure on the government. The NAACP leadership was drawn into sponsorship of this action. The pilgrimage was poorly organized, the turnout falling far short of what was possible. Nevertheless, it was a successful demonstration and a historic occasion.

Though threatened many times in the past, this was the first mass Negro march on Washington. The chief impulse came from the Southern Negroes, whose entry on the national political scene showed them to be capable of mobilizing beside themselves the chief national Negro organization and a section of the labor movement. This action forecasts motion toward a higher stage of struggle that can lead to independent political action in opposition to the capitalist parties.

Outside the South the colored masses have been highly responsive to the Montgomery struggle and to the steps taken by the Southern Leaders Conference since the boycott victory. They are wondering why they

can't get into action themselves. Within the NAACP the ranks are growing restless. They want more membership participation in the organization, more internal democracy, as was developed through the MIA. So far the masses in general have looked primarily to the NAACP to set them into motion. If the organization now fails to act, other organizational vehicles will in time be developed.

Whether the NAACP will find a way to fall in step with the new situation will depend on the outcome of struggles outside and inside the organization. For the next period a fluid process can be expected in the shaping of policies and the development of organizational forms to implement them. In time, however, the NAACP must either readjust to the changing course of the civil rights movement or yield its place as the dominant national organization in the movement. The ultimate showdown can be expected to involve a shift in the fundamental axis of the struggle, away from reliance on the capitalist government and toward mass action in direct opposition to government policy.

Conditions for the shift are being prepared in the South by a basic process of social change. Mechanization of agriculture and a parallel rise of new industries is transforming a predominantly agricultural into an industrial people. Colored and white alike are affected. A vast number have been entirely uprooted from the land and drawn into the industrial centers. In addition many small farmers and agricultural day laborers seek part-time jobs in industry because they can't make out on the land alone.

Southern Industry Expands

Expansion of the Southern industrial economy covers a whole series of products, extending from industrial machinery, through war materials, to a large variety of consumer items. According to the magazine *U.S. News and World Report* of January 27, 1956, gains in manufacturing output over the last 15 years range from 353% for Alabama to 533% for South Carolina. The South now accounts for nearly one-quarter of the country's manufacturing facilities as compared to 9% at the turn of the century.

A similar rise in the number of Southern wage earners engaged in manufacturing is shown by the *National Negro Year Book*. During the period from 1940 to 1950 the percentage of all Southern wage earners thus engaged rose from 16.0 to 18.4; in the same ten years the percentage of non-whites involved rose from 10.1 to 14.4. Mechanization of agriculture, on the other hand, has resulted since 1950 in the elimination of 55,000 sharecroppers in the Southeastern states alone, leaving a remaining total of around 200,000 in that single area of the South. This figure, related to the land, reflects the continuing propulsion of uprooted agricultural peoples toward the industrial centers.

Thus in the South, as else-

where in the nation, the Negro people are undergoing an intensive process of urbanization and industrialization. City life confronts them with the same old prejudices they faced on the land, only the resulting social patterns are somewhat different. In the communities they are segregated but they also become more compactly organized. In industry they meet general discrimination but they also gain a higher form of class homogeneity than they were able to attain on the land. A new necessity and a new opportunity arises for a firmer class unity of the colored and white toilers than could be found in agriculture. Implied is a major breach in the wall of white supremacy leading toward fusion of the civil rights movement with the class struggle in industry.

Keenly aware of these social implications, the monopoly capitalists who today dominate Southern political rule seek to strengthen the wall of white supremacy in order to keep labor divided along color lines. In the last analysis the White Citizens Councils are actually the tool of the monopoly bankers, industrialists and planters. They are using this tool to maintain the open shop, keep wages down and coin super-profits at labor's expense.

Top Union Officials Duck Fight

Failure of the national union officials to seriously combat the white supremacists has helped the White Citizens Councils to gain strength in the unions. As a result existing prejudices among white workers are in some cases deepened. A general

pattern of conformity with white supremacist policies emerges for lack of class struggle education and an effective means of resistance to the racists. White workers who would like to fight back hesitate for fear of reprisals against which they have

no ready defense. Usually they resort to indirect methods of showing their sympathy with the colored workers in the civil rights struggle and their feelings of solidarity with them as class brothers.

Although industrial employment in the South is rapidly expanding, less than one-fifth of the workers are organized into unions. Open shop conditions have in turn perpetuated the Southern wage differential. According to U.S. Department of Labor figures for 1953-54, for every \$1 a production worker earned in Chicago, his counterpart in Atlanta, Dallas or New Orleans earned only 70 to 75 cents. These circumstances have given rise in the North and West to an increasing flow of runaway plants toward the South.



Deliberate efforts to draw industries southward are illustrated by a current national advertising campaign sponsored by the Oklahoma State Department of Commerce and Industry, a governmental arm of capitalist political rule. As published in the

New York Times of March 10, 1957, the advertisement states in part: "In May of 1955 the average hourly pay of Oklahoma labor was \$1.74 per hour compared with the national average of \$1.84 per hour [wage differential]. The percent of man-days worked, lost through labor disputes for the nation was .72, while that of Oklahoma was only .33 [open shop]."

To workers outside the South the danger of runaway plants and the drag of the wage differential are costly to their employment and their earning power. Unionization of the South is therefore vital to labor nationally. But as the experience in building the CIO taught, unions can't be organized without the aid of the colored workers involved. Consequently it is a matter of class duty for labor to support the civil rights movement in order to help forge colored and white solidarity in industry.

The AFL-CIO in Flint, Michigan recently denounced local attempts to form a White Citizens Council. This action clearly stems from lessons first learned in the great sit-down strikes of 1937 through which the CIO organized the auto workers. However, the Flint policy declaration gives rise to some questions. If the White Citizens Councils are anti-labor in Flint, are they not also anti-labor in Montgomery, Alabama? If Flint labor is now threatened by this white-supremacist tool of the capitalist class, shouldn't the AFL-CIO launch an offensive against the White Citizens Councils at the fountainhead in the South? Shouldn't that offensive take the form of an all-out union organizational drive, coupled with militant support of the civil rights movement, the unions' natural ally

against the anti-Negro, anti-labor conspiracy of the white supremacists?

The union movement is in an excellent position to cut away the mass base of the White Citizens Councils. Vigorous union intervention, backed by up the full national power of organized labor, would evoke a real response among the Southern workers. The dynamic strike wave that raced across the South in 1955 revealed the growing worker sentiment for union action. In a sense this strike wave paralleled the great 1934 strikes which arose as the heat-lightning signalling the coming CIO storm.

Objective circumstances are preparing the white workers to accept the colored toilers as class brothers. Open-shop conditions are creating problems that make racial prejudice more and more expensive to the white workers. At the same time the Montgomery boycott action cannot help but give them a new appreciation of the fighting qualities of the Negro workers.

The Negro workers, for their part, appear eager to join in the union struggle. However, they want first-class citizenship within organized labor, along with union support of their civil rights in industry and throughout society. By meeting this just demand labor will serve its own interests, gaining colored-white solidarity in industry and winning over the colored people generally as allies. This alliance, which flows naturally from the mutual interests and essential class affinity of the labor and civil rights movements, can be firmly cemented by the Negro workers.

There are virtually no capitalists among the Negro people and only a thin layer of middle class

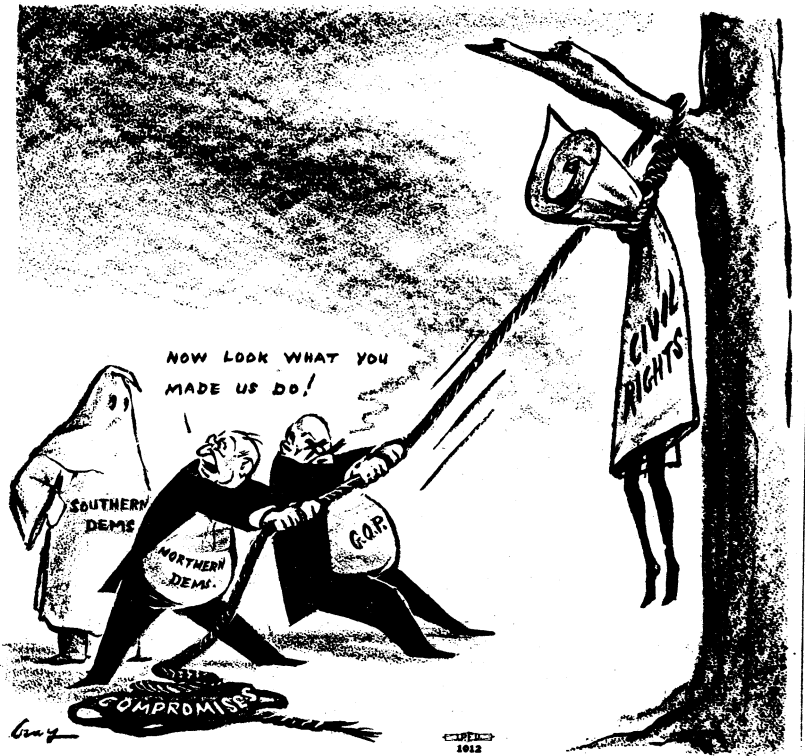
elements. As a people they are overwhelmingly working class in composition. Taken nationally, a large section of the Negro workers are already unionized. These unionists are farthest advanced in connecting the fight for their civil rights with the struggle to defend their class interests and in raising political consciousness to a higher level.

Usually the last to be hired and the first to be fired, the threat of unemployment becomes for them both a civil rights and a class issue requiring united labor-Negro action in all respects. As a segregated minority they suffer the worst housing crisis, thus feeling an acute need for common efforts by the labor and Negro movements to compel government action in the housing field. Migratory pressures on the city ghettos are pushing the Negro people out into new residential areas where they meet vicious white supremacist resistance. Yet everywhere in the country they see the capitalist politicians ducking responsibility for enforcement of the Negroes' right to a home. They find little equality anywhere, except in taxation to finance the capitalist war program toward which they show no enthusiasm.

These conditions force the Negro militants toward an examination of the political nature of the government power. They find the main bastion of white supremacist rule among the Southern Democrats whose political strength derives in great part from the disenfranchisement of the colored masses. Nationally they see the Democrats aid the white supremacists by giving them the chairmanships of key Congressional committees. They behold the Republicans making their contribution in the form of a coalition with the Southern

Democrats to enact generally repressive laws, while the Presi-

dent remains neutral on the side of the racists.



Need for Independent Politics

Recognition is therefore dawning that to break the power of the white supremacists the masses must enter the political arena as an independent force. The proposal of the Southern Leaders Conference to organize a mass pilgrimage to Washington was a limited step in that direction. It also pointed the way for the union movement in opposing the governmental attacks on labor. In fact there is great need for the labor and civil rights movements to join forces in independent political action to ad-

vance their mutual interests.

As yet the Negro movement is ahead of organized labor in gathering mass momentum. The union struggle remains muted due largely to the high level of employment and the tolerable wage level made possible through production for war. However, there is considerable ferment within the unions nationally and among the unorganized workers of the South. With the civil rights movement upsetting the national political equilibrium and advancing the political education

of the working class, labor is brought that much closer to a mass upsurge. When the workers act their struggles will lend fresh vigor to the Negro movement. This interrelation between the two movements will tend to lead them toward unity of purpose in the sphere of independent political action.

Their fusion into a united political force would imply a head-on collision with the capitalist ruling class, breaking up the present two-party swindle and precipitating a class polarization in politics. In the process the civil rights forces could be expected to ally themselves with labor to launch an independent labor party based on the unions.

The chief obstacles to this development are the union officials with their middle class mentality and the middle class Negro leadership. Both sets of bureaucrats violate the democratic rights of the membership acting to keep the masses chained to the liberal capitalist politicians. Shrinking from direct struggle against the capitalist ruling class, they appeal to the capitalist government for reforms to appease the masses. Toward this end they give general support to the Democratic Party, with an occasional sortie into Republican politics to demonstrate their "independence." As a consequence they spread capitalist ideas among the masses, impair class consciousness and sow illusions that a fundamental change can be brought about under capitalism.

Official union support of the civil rights movement is deliberately channeled through the conservative leadership dominating the NAACP. This policy flows from fear that mass action in the civil rights struggle will cause ferment among Negro workers

in the unions nationally and help precipitate mass action to unionize the South. A militant leadership would welcome such possibilities and act to spread the process. But the top union officials see only a danger of upsetting their class-collaborationist scheme to refer all social problems to the Democratic Party for adjustment. Above all they fear to face the race issue in the South, an evasion of leadership responsibility that doomed in advance the Southern organization drive started in 1946. Their failure enabled the Dixiecrats to stay in power and enact "Right-to-Work" laws as a further barrier to unionization.

False policies within the radical movement have helped to prop up the class collaborationist political line of the union officials and the conservative Negro leaders. The Social Democrats, having abandoned class-struggle concepts as they capitulated to the capitalist war policy, act in close kinship with the bureaucrats dominating the mass movement. The Communist Party, following the deceptive Stalinist line of "peaceful co-existence," advances the misleading notion that fundamental social problems can be solved through an "anti-monopoly coalition" cutting across class lines. Both tendencies render service to the conservative leaders of the labor and Negro movements in keeping the masses tied to the Democratic Party.

The Communist Party, which in the past has been the most successful in recruiting Negro militants, has also done a lot to discredit the radical movement in the eyes of the colored masses. Among Negroes, as in American life generally, the CP leaders have consistently demonstrated

their readiness to subordinate all other interests to those of the Soviet bureaucracy. Twists and turns in Kremlin diplomacy, rather than changes in American conditions, have accounted for the abrupt changes in the CP line on the Negro struggle: "militancy" against Jim Crow during the Stalin-Hitler pact; hostility to the Negro struggle as "disrupting the war effort" during the U.S.-Soviet wartime alliance; "militancy" again during the cold war; and now, a readiness to take a "statesmanlike" view even of anti-Negro forces if they are willing to support "peaceful co-existence."

The Communist Party at one time advocated establishment of a Negro Republic in the Black Belt. This slogan ran counter to the integrationist aims of the colored people and further alienated them from socialist ideas.

Mass Action Is the Key

Motion toward the socialist solution is today foreshadowed by the Montgomery struggle. Class collaborationist policies can hold the masses in check only so long as capitalism can grant real concessions, one upon another. Since there is imperative need for fundamental social change, each concession leads to new and more far-reaching demands. The recent civil rights battles have proven in life the class-struggle principle — that mass pressure is the only means to wrest significant reforms from the ruling class. Far from appeasing the Negro people, the legal reforms and other concessions thus far granted have become the starting point for broader struggles and more militant methods aimed at translating legal victories into living realities.

It also created confusion about the principles of self-determination. Theoretically, the profound growth of racial solidarity and national consciousness among the Negro people might under certain future conditions give rise to separatist demands. Since minority peoples have the democratic right to exercise self-determination, socialists would be obligated to support such demands if they should reflect the mass will. Yet even under these circumstances socialists would continue to advocate integration rather than separation as the best solution of the race question for Negro and white workers alike. While upholding the right of self-determination, they would continue to urge an alliance of the Negro people and the working class to bring about a socialist solution of the civil rights problem within the existing national framework.

Capitalism therefore finds it increasingly difficult to grant sufficient reforms to appease the masses. As Montgomery shows, this contradiction leads inevitably to mass actions that tend to upset the capitalist political equilibrium. Conditions are thus ripening for replacement of the reformist leadership of the mass movement with a revolutionary socialist leadership.

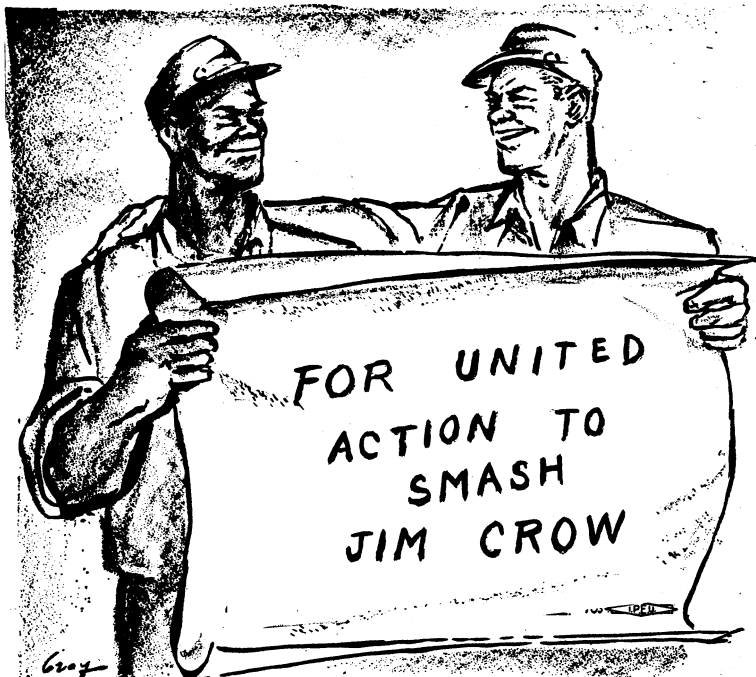
The process can be helped along through a transitional program leading toward fusion of the civil rights movement with the class struggle for socialism. This program takes as its point of departure the independent character of the Negro movement as a minority struggle for democratic reforms under capitalism, focusing special attention on the need for labor to support the struggle. Organized

labor should be in the forefront of the fight for such civil rights legislation as an FEPC with teeth in it, anti-lynch laws, poll tax repeal and measures to protect the voting rights of the colored people. Labor should give militant backing to demands for Presidential enforcement of Negro rights, including the use of federal troops against the white supremacists where tactical conditions warrant such a demand.

Full support must also be given the colored freedom fighters in taking measures for their own self-defense against white supremacist terror. During the Montgomery action sheer necessity produced an embryonic form of defense guards. As the struggle deepens this defense mechanism will be required to assume

more concrete forms according to the given tactical situation. Again it is in labor's elementary class interests to prevent the White Citizens Councils from creating a polarization along color lines whereby all-Negro defense guards would have to stand alone against white supremacist terrorists. Acts of violence have been and will continue to be directed against the unions as well as the Negro people. As a real campaign to organize the South gets under way such attacks will grow in intensity. The labor and civil rights movements therefore have a common problem that should be met through united self-defense measures.

Socialists have a special responsibility to mobilize labor support of Negro mass actions



and to help give concrete political direction to these struggles. Labor should be called to join such demonstrations as the mass pilgrimage to Washington. These measures offer a realistic vehicle to generalize the mass demands and direct them with maximum force squarely at the federal government. Mass experience of this kind at the seat of governmental power helps to dispel illusions in the capitalist government and speed the break with capitalist politics.

Socialists should encourage and support the running of independent Negro candidates, against the Democratic and Republican tickets. Such support, with the necessary criticism where the program is inadequate, is fully justified on the principle of the right of Negroes to minority representation in government. The unions should be urged to back independent Negro candidates and to run their own independent candidates in opposition to the capitalist parties. Fusion of these independent political currents should be advocated through a labor-Negro alliance to form an independent labor party based on the unions. A labor party would in turn serve as the political instrument for creation of a workers and farmers government, acting solely in the interests of the toiling masses. That government, being genuinely representative of the Negro people, would act to guarantee their full civil rights. To achieve these ends it would of necessity move toward the establishment of a socialist society.

If the fight for complete equality is to be won, the Negro workers must take the leadership out of the hands of the middle class elements. That task requires the building of a left wing founded

on class-struggle perspectives. In their dual role as Negroes and as unionists the colored workers are in a position to strive within both the civil rights and union spheres for the fusion of these two movements. As the union rank and file is brought to the aid of the civil rights struggle, the Negro workers will in turn gain support in asserting their leadership.

The revolutionary socialist movement can help this process along by initiating united front actions in solidarity with the Negro people. Through a united effort by all radical tendencies momentum can be developed to draw broader forces, including sections of the labor movement, into the supporting actions. This initiative on the part of revolutionary socialists would help create receptivity to their ideas within the civil rights movement. Circulation of the socialist press could be expanded among colored readers introducing them to the class-struggle program and counteracting the capitalist ideology spread by the daily papers, radio and TV.

Socialists should give active support to the NAACP, the MIA and other organizations in the civil rights movement, working to build them while seeking to extend the influence of left wing and progressive forces within them. Following the example set by the MIA, full internal democracy should be advocated in all these organizations so that the membership may have a voice in shaping policy and an opportunity to play a genuine role in the struggle for equality.

Revolutionary socialists are confronted with complex educational tasks in connection with the civil rights struggle. It is necessary to have a thorough un-

derstanding of the historical, theoretical and practical aspects of the fight for Negro equality in its independent character as a movement for democratic reforms under capitalism, a movement which under conditions of capitalist decay has a profoundly revolutionary character. Similar knowledge is needed of the history, theory and practice of the working class struggle as developed across the years. In addition the class conscious militants must have a firm grasp of the interconnection between these two movements and the manner in which they may be fused into a common struggle to resolve their mutual problems. Planned educational programs to

meet these needs are a must for the socialist movement.

To have real meaning education must be related to action, helping to implement the struggle itself and in turn gaining enrichment from the experiences of the living movement. Consequently socialists must closely follow all new developments in the mass movement and strive to play a part in these events. Through careful study of the flow of political life, and an exchange of views to clarify disputed points of analysis and program, the socialist movement can steadily gain in its capacity to lend strength to the just cause of the colored people.

Socialist Workers Party Proposals

Throughout the years the Socialist Workers Party has consistently supported the struggle for Negro equality. Our efforts have included: demands for effective governmental action to enforce civil rights; support to the NAACP, the MIA and other organizations fighting in the interests of the colored people; initiation of protest actions against police brutality, legal frameups, lynch terror, segregation, job discrimination and other Jim-Crow practices; support to Negro candidates for public office so long as they run independently of the Democratic and Republican parties.

In the unions the Socialist Workers Party has sided with the colored workers in their fight for full membership rights and for Negro representation in the leadership. We have consistently urged organized labor to give full backing to the Negro people. We have sought to explain why the labor movement must have the support of the colored

workers to win its battles and why success for the civil rights movement depends on the support of the white working class. Above all we have stressed the need for class political consciousness among worker militants, colored and white, as the key to victory for both movements. Discrimination against the Negro people is only the crudest expression of the many forms of discrimination and oppression existing under capitalism. If these social wrongs are to be overcome, it is necessary to abolish the capitalist system of class exploitation that breeds these wrongs and to replace it with a socialist society founded on the principles of justice and equality for all who toil.

In accordance with these concepts the Socialist Workers Party believes the socialist movement should advocate: Complete economic, social and political equality for all minority peoples. Abolish all forms of bureaucratic control within the

mass movement and establish complete rank-and-file democracy. Discard all class-colaborationist policies and institute class-struggle methods. Fight for equality through mass action instead of relying on the capitalist government to grant reforms. Run independent Negro candidates in opposition to both capitalist parties. Full union support to the civil rights move-

ment. A labor-Negro alliance to launch an independent labor party based on the unions. Replace the capitalist government with workers and farmers government. Abolish capitalism and establish a socialist society.

Only on this class-struggle road does the Socialist Workers Party believe the civil rights question can be fundamentally and permanently resolved.

"Labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded."

- - Karl Marx

"In Our Hands There Lies the Power"



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