

## RESOLUTION ON THE NEGRO QUESTION

1. From the period of its foundation the Branches of the Workers Party have carried on propaganda and agitation among the Negroes in their respective areas. The space devoted in Labor Action to the lives and struggles of the Negro people is evidence of the importance which the Workers Party attaches to the Negroes as destined to be among the foremost in the struggle for socialism. The name and general policy of the W.P. have been made known to thousands of Negroes in various sections of the country.
2. Unfortunately the organizational work at the center, under the direction of the National Negro Committee, was swamped for many months by the tasks of organizing the new Party, and the problems created by the suddenness and magnitude of the international events that began last June. It was not until just before the March Plenum that the Committee was reconstituted and a serious attempt made to coordinate the experiences and to draw the necessary lessons of the past period.
3. The aims and work of the Committee were greatly facilitated and clarified by the political activity among the Negroes themselves. Owing to their special situation at the very bottom of the economic structure of American society; and the additional persecutions to which they are subjected on account of their race, they have been the first substantial section of the American working class to protest against the fraudulent claims of American Capitalism to be the guardian of democracy. Their instinctive desire for mass action has been deflected by Roosevelt's clever maneuvers and the treachery of men like Randolph and Walter White, of the N.A.A.C.P. who collaborated with Roosevelt in sabotaging the projected March of the Negroes to Washington. But the unanimity of the Negroes' demand for their rightful place in industry and the fear which it created in the administration, shows where, in the next period, the main battle is going to be fought and where the main work of the Party must lie; it embodies on a mass scale in a period of growing social crisis, the experience of the Party.
4. The experience of the Party in Negro work may be summed up as follows:
  - a) The Negroes are extremely receptive to our general revolutionary agitation and propaganda, even if many of them are not thoroughly clear as to the particular branch of revolutionary struggle which we represent.
  - b. They are, on the whole, as ready to join the Party as Whites are.
  - c) They do not stay in the Party when they join.

The first two points call for no comment, except an intensification of our agitation along the correct lines. It is with point (c) that we have specially to deal. From share cropper to university student, the Negro members and ex-members have one main complaint against the Party, that it is not a Party of action. The average Negro revolutionary with whom the Party has hitherto come into contact, while as

willing as any white to take an historical perspective of the social revolution, finds it difficult to continue as a member of the Party which is not active in the struggle against the immediate discriminations which press so urgently on himself and his people. This is the general aim, therefore, that every Party Branch must set itself: active participation in the day to day struggle of the Negroes, and it is regrettable that experience and not theory alone had to teach us that lesson. To make this orientation with success is a difficult task for the Party in its present stage of development. Were the Party a mass Party with wide contacts and influence in the unions, it would be able to attract to itself the best type of proletarian Negro, and on this basis build a militant nucleus not only in the union but for the widest struggle against discrimination anywhere. That, at present, is possible, but only to a limited degree. We therefore have to do the next best. We must dilligently seek to join existing Negro organizations, not to raise agitation against discrimination in general, but with the specific purpose of raising the problem of discrimination against Negroes in the war industries and in related aspects of the government's war preparations, army, navy, air force, existing federal departments and new agencies. The class struggle on a world scale centers round the war. Our Negro work must center around it also.

In the Negro organizations, the immediate task for the next period will be the stimulation and organization of militant struggle against discrimination. If the Party should attempt to use these organizations solely or mainly as a vehicle for anti-war or socialist propaganda, it will destroy its chances of doing useful work of any kind. But at the same time the Party must not forget that wherever it is its main task as in the present period, is the struggle against the war and for the socialist revolution as the only way out. Far more than all other social aggregations in the U.S.A., the Negroes see the hypocrisy and pretence of the American war-mongers. Work among the Negroes even in their own organizations therefore offers exceptional opportunities for winning away an increasing number of Negroes.

The above being always borne in mind, in the Negro organizations, as soon as it is tactically convenient, but without any undue emphasis on caution,

- a) We raise the question of the formation of a local committee of all Negro and other organizations to protest the discrimination of Negroes in the particular city.
- b) If such an organization already exists we propose that the particular organization join it and stimulate it to militant action.
- c) We aim, if possible, at action directed against a single corporation, e.g., the Bus Co. in New York, Curtiss-Wright in Columbus, Glen Martin in Baltimore, etc.
- d) We draw special attention to the necessity of youth training, and the opening of all training schools, both government and private, to all Negro youth.

o) We emphasize the necessity of militant action by the masses of the people themselves under their own specially elected leaders in order to guard against any deals between middle-class Negroes and the employers. We propose that the Committee itself investigate the local employment situation, seek out Negro workers and youth, go with them to local plants, and schools, and in case of discrimination plan necessary action.

5) In such an organization, the Party will itself enter in its own name and with its own representatives wherever possible.

g) If the organization in question is reserved exclusively for Negroes, and the local has no Negro members, the Party must seek to maintain the closest contact. But whatever the general circumstances to which the Party member will have to adapt himself, the Party must not fail, to the extent of its abilities, to carry on agitation on its own account, and in its own name; joint action in picketing, letters to all sections of the local press, Negro and white, leaflets, etc.. But unless the Party itself is strong enough in personnel and contacts to undertake the formation of such a committee itself, its Party agitation should be directed towards the support of such an organization if it already exists, or toward the formation of similar bodies by local organizations and individuals.

5. This work is already being attempted now wherever we have branches. It must be energetically and patiently pursued.

a) It stimulates the activity of the Negro masses, without which all our efforts are doomed to sterility.

b) It gives the opportunity of making the best types of contacts, excepting those which can be made in industry.

c) it gives our members invaluable experience of Negro life and struggle.

d) It is the best means in the present period by which a Party with limited forces can actually associate itself with the mass activity of the Negroes.

e) It affords the most important field where our Negro members and close contacts, under the direction of the Party, can be fruitfully and persistently active, and thus recognize that the membership in the Party is not only theoretically but actually a means of advancing the cause of the Negroes.

6. A) Though the above task is the main task of the Party in Negro Work during the coming period, it does not mean that other opportunities of work must be ignored or neglected. This close contact with Negro life and struggle will certainly bring to the Party opportunities for acting with the Negroes on questions not directly connected with jobs for Negroes. The recent participation of our Party in the Washington Committee against Police Brutality affords an example of this. The

locals, according to their forces, will carry on neighborhood work, street meetings, etc. for our general program. But all the Negro work of the Party must center around the determination to participate in the actual struggles of the day.

B) Inside and outside Negro organizations, the Party at all times makes it its special duty to denounce the murders, lynchings, and violence directed against the Negro soldiers in the camps; and to point out the necessity of organized protest by soldiers and civilians whites and Negroes alike.

7. In two areas the Party has special opportunities which require special efforts. In Chicago the Party after years of hard work has acquired for itself some standing in the Washington Park Forum, a mass organization, predominantly Negro in composition, and organized for the discussion of Negro problems. The Chicago Branch must pursue its work in this field with energy, patience, flexibility, and yet with boldness. In the South, the Party has established good contacts with sharecroppers and day-laborers, also as the result of long and patient work. The Party must make a major effort to establish locals in these areas, work which is difficult and will tax the Party heavily. But as far as Negro work is concerned, both Chicago and the South need the special interest and attention of the Party as a whole, because in both these places, the Party has the opportunity of creating a mass basis for itself, which, in time could react with great force on the Negro work elsewhere and the general work of the Party. The chief aim at present should be the establishment of a Negro organizer in at least one of these areas.

8. As is inevitable in the present situation of the Negroes in American society, the Party will be faced with the problem of forming Negro periphery organizations. In Washington, Baltimore and Philadelphia, one such organization, the Emancipators, was tried and has admittedly failed. The chief reason appears to have been the attempt to appeal to Negroes on a general basis instead of on specific grievances, which were pressing urgently on the Negroes, and on which public attention was centered. In Chicago, on the other hand, a periphery organization has been formed, and though based on specific needs, it has had only one striking success, it has proved its value and must be continued. The general program outlined above indicates that the foundation of such organizations is not likely to become urgent in the Party work during the next period. Under no circumstances, however, is the formation of such an organization to be looked upon as a substitute for work carried on among the Negroes in the name of the Party, as undoubtedly occurred in the case of the Emancipators.

9. The Party in seeking to carry out the above program has one main danger to guard against. The membership already is subjected to the enormous pressure of American bourgeois society which is saturated with white chauvinism. The Party will have to struggle constantly to keep its ranks clear of this, which can take many forms. In the vigorous carrying out of the work outlined above, there will necessarily be a tendency to see the Negro struggle as something separate and apart from the general class struggle. To correct this the Party must carry out in the Branches a strenuous program of education, not of exhortation

It must keep the membership aware of the essential unity of the struggle of the working class. The Negro department proposes to issue not only popular pamphlets addressed specially to Negroes, but a series of pamphlets and articles on the Negro question, nationally and internationally, in which special attention will be paid to the common struggles of Negroes and whites in America and elsewhere for industrial and political aims. These pamphlets and articles will be written for and addressed to the working class movement as a whole.

10. The above program must be carried out irrespective of the racial personnel of the Branches. But the party must recognize that the work can only achieve effectiveness if it is carried out mainly by Negro party members. The Party therefore must spare no pains in the education and training of such Negro members as it has and may gain in the near future. The prevalent habit of working hard with a Negro contact and then, as soon as the contact becomes a member, to take him or her for granted and start on another contact must be vigilantly corrected, as it is always likely to recur. Until each Party Branch has Negro members well trained in Marxism and taking part in Negro work not as Negro nationalists but as part of the world-wide class struggle for socialism, the efforts of the Party will bring little concrete results, and will ultimately end in discouragement.

11. The Negro department undertakes to publish the Negro Bulletin at regular intervals and proposed to divide it into two parts;

- a) General information
- b) Special party matters

By this division it is hoped that one part of the Bulletin will be made available for sympathizers and contacts. One test of the degree to which the program is being carried out will be the number and variety of the contributions sent in to the press and Bulletin by the various branches.

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