

# THE NEGRO MOVEMENT

## The International Trade Union Conference of Negro Workers.

By James W. Ford (New York).

A great International Trade Union Conference of Negro Workers, will take place on July 1st., 1930 at **London**, England.

The 4th Congress of the R. I. L. U. really gave this coming Conference its mighty background and its historical significance. Sharp attention was drawn to the significance of the Negro industrial proletariat in the U. S. A. and its possibilities in the leadership of the liberation movement of the Negro peoples; and also considerable attention was given to the movement of the native toilers of South Africa. An **International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers** was set up to stimulate the class initiative of the Negro workers and to awaken the international proletariat to the importance of this powerful class ally.

The rapidly growing economic crisis of world capitalism, expressed sharply in the recent Wall Street stock market crash in the U. S. A., has intensified the imperialist exploitation and oppression of the colonial and semi-colonial peoples, especially the black toiling masses. Faced with mass unemployment of millions of workers and the shortage of markets, the bourgeoisie is turning more and more to colonial sectors in order to cast the burden of the crisis on to the backs of colonial toilers.

But the continuous speeding-up of the workers and the constant rationalisation of industry produces more and more **mass unemployment** in the capitalist countries and even extends into colonial spheres like South Africa; at the same time the Negro toilers are rising in revolt throughout the

world, in conjunction with the upward development of the revolutionary proletarian movement in all capitalist countries and in the general decline of world capitalism.

The first great battle that gave tremendous significance to the rising tide of revolt on the "Dark" continent was the great revolt in Equatorial Africa in 1928. It was the first of the numerous insurrections that have occurred in Equatorial Africa against French imperialism, that was not confined to one place, but extended over the whole of the territory, and comprised the total population of Equatorial Africa, and had such a long duration, lasting from November 1928 until February 1929.

This fight was mainly a struggle against **Forced Labour Recruitment**; the natives systematically killed off all the chiefs of the recruitment troops. Thus the struggle took on a labour character. And we must say, that this struggle had as its basis the embryo of an organised movement of native workers.

War preparations and the securing of troops for strike purposes in France was another important cause of this uprising. The French imperialists, in their haste to complete the Ocean-Congo railroad in order to tap the resources of Central Africa and to establish the "Black Army" which is to be concentrated in Northern Africa as well as around certain industrial centres in France, killed off thousands of native workers like flies.

Although drowned in blood by the overwhelming forces of French imperialism this Central African revolt is a landmark in the struggles of the Negro toilers of Africa.

The first practical application of the use of the "Black Army" has already been seen in northern France at **Gard**, where 18,000 miners were on strike, and white troops fraternized with the strikers, the white artillery was replaced by black troops from Senegal and Equatorial Africa.

In **South Africa** the native movement was betrayed in 1927 by the native reformist, **Kadalie**, who affiliated the I. C. U. to the yellow Amsterdam International. In the meantime the conditions of the natives were getting worse and demanding militant leadership, which was not forthcoming from Kadalie. Then one **Ballinger**, a white reformist of the Independent Labour Party of England, was sent out to South Africa. Kadalie and Ballinger successfully disintegrated the I. C. U. and it dwindled down to nothing. Thousands of workers left the I. C. U. Under the leadership of the Communist Party the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions was organised and affiliated to the R. I. L. U. Immediately militant struggles took place, many of them joint struggles of native workers and white workers. At **Durban** last summer serious clashes took place between the workers and the police. Constantly increasing pressure on the workers points to more fierce battles ahead between the workers and the bourgeoisie.

In the **U.S.A.** the **Trade Union Unity League** has seriously taken up the organisation of the Negro workers, especially in the South. Organisations are being formed of both black and white workers. Racial barriers are being smashed by the holding of joint meetings of black and white workers, a number of which have been held at Chattanooga, Birmingham, Atlanta, Winston-Salem, right in the hotbed of American capitalist segregation and jim-crow practices.

Thousands of Negro workers responded to the call of the T. U. U. L. on March 6th to demonstrate against unemployment in all parts of the country. In the south white and black organisers of the T. U. U. L. were arrested and placed on the chaingang.

In America too the Negro must struggle against reformist leadership as well as against the white fascist A. F. L. and also Negro petty-bourgeois influence. **Randolph**, a Negro reformist, has betrayed an organisation of Negro workers into the A. F. L. and has himself become an open social-fascist. In **Chicago** recently he engaged the police and department of justice agents of the U.S. to guard an open meeting and to throw workers out who came in with a militant programme.

Everything is being done by the social-fascists to stem the tide of radicalisation of the Negro toilers. In the south Negro preachers and petty-bourgeois have openly co-operated with the white fascist bosses in an attack upon the Negro and white organisers of the T. U. U. L. The workers of the South are in a militant mood as a result of mass unemployment, wage cuts, long hours, and the agricultural crisis. They are responding to the leadership of the R. I. L. U., to the inspiration of success-

ful socialist construction in the Soviet Union and to the struggle against war.

It will be on this basis that the International Conference in London will respond to the need for organised action of Negro toilers. This basis of organisation and the struggle against ideologies inimical to the interests of the Negro masses will lead towards the wide organisation of Negro toilers.

But the Conference will also be faced with mobilising the Negro toilers for struggle against the more vicious policies and attacks of the imperialists and their social-democratic allies, such as the MacDonald "Labour" Party, who are shooting down Negro toilers in various parts of the world.

American imperialism strangles the toiling masses in Haiti, in Liberia and San Domingo, while British, French, Belgian and Portuguese imperialists are grinding the life blood out of the millions of enslaved Negroes in Africa.

The Colonial policy of the MacDonald "Labour" Government was demonstrated recently when 43 native women in **Nigeria** were shot down by British troops. In **Gambia** also the young trade union movement is facing the most brutal persecution of the British colonial Government; martial law has been proclaimed, trade union leaders arrested and the entire labour movement is threatened with being wiped out.

Everywhere the Negro toilers are offering the greatest resistance to the imperialists, in Jamaica and Haiti, in Trinidad, Barbados, Grenada and British Guinea, throughout Africa, and the U. S. A.

All these struggles are being conducted under great objective and subjective difficulties. On the one hand there is a tremendous lack of conscious revolutionary leadership, and, on the other hand, absolute isolation from the more advanced and experienced revolutionary proletariat of Europe and America. Despite this the very conditions under which Negroes live throughout the world drive them into the struggle and prepare them to play an ever increasing role in the international revolutionary struggle against imperialism.

The test of the European and American labour movements will be the measure of support they render the International Conference of Negro workers.

## SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION IN THE SOVIET UNION

### The Workers and the Opening of the Turkestan-Siberian Railway.

By Anise.

The following letter has been received by us from an American woman newspaper correspondent who accompanied the special Delegation which travelled from Moscow to take part in the opening of the Turksib railway. Ed.

I.

I am on a special train bound from Moscow for the opening of the Turkestan-Siberian Railway. For eight days we are winding southeast through the wheat fields of European Russia, then over the Urals, then across the alternating sandy wastes and grassy steppes that mark the Soviet Republic of the Kazaks, and so to Alma Ata and the "Joining" where the rails will be laid and our train will be the first to pass over.

Some thirty foreign correspondents are on the train: Americans form the largest group, Germans the second. They try to send telegrams to their various newspapers, but find it difficult. In this region the telegraph operators do not know the Latin alphabet. The foreign journalists are especially interested in the exotic nature of the land through which we are passing, — the camels that browse near the railway stations, the dark-skinned, picturesquely clad Kazaks and their felt tents known as "Yurts" in which they travel from winter to summer pastures seeking grass.

But the foreign correspondents know also the world-wide significance of this railway,—else their newspaper would not send them here. The Turkestan-Siberian Railway will change the history of Asia. From it timber and wheat will pour southward to the irrigated cotton lands of the Uzbeks. These