

SOUTH AFRICA

ECONOMIC SITUATION.

A MARKED change is taking place in the economic development of South Africa. The production of raw material (wheat, wool, maize, gold, diamonds) for the British market is giving place to the creation of an industry of its own which is developing side by side with big capitalist production of commercial crops—cotton, wool, sugar, tobacco, fruit, etc. Although the new industries and capitalist agriculture are still working mainly with British capital, American capital is already beginning to penetrate and make itself felt in South Africa. The development of a South African industry is encouraged by the present Government by means of high protective tariffs and the abolition of preferential treatment for British goods.

This development, which has been making rapid progress since the world war, has not only changed the old form of production—the Dutch peasants in Transvaal produced mainly for their own consumption, while the British and Dutch farms in the Cape country produced for the South African and the British market—but has driven thousands of farmers from the land, converting them into urban paupers and thereby strengthening the forces fighting for complete independence from the British Empire. It has also increased the demand for labour power for industry and agriculture to such an extent that the labour question, the problem of white and black labour, has become the main problem in South Africa.

The migration of the natives to the towns, which has deprived the farmers of their cheap labour forces, has driven thousands of poor farmers from the land. In the last 10 years about 70,000 farmers have been ruined in this manner and have swelled the army of destitute whites in the towns; in 1926 their number had reached to about 100,000. In 94 districts the population has decreased; this retrogression is strongest in the Cape country and in the Orange Free State.

POLITICAL SITUATION.

The problem of securing an adequate supply of labour power for industry and agriculture and at the same time preserving a "white South Africa," is more and more dominating the political parties. It has led to a re-grouping within them and to the "Pact" of the Nationalist Party led by General Herzog, *with the Labour Party*, against the South African Party led by General Smuts. The Nationalist Party of Herzog is the Party of the Dutch middle and poor peasants, national industry, Dutch urban

petty bourgeoisie and poor white; while the Labour Party is based upon the British and Dutch skilled workers and a section of the British urban petty bourgeoisie and intellectuals, built upon individual membership. The South African Party has the support of British big mining and finance capital, the Dutch and British big farmers in the Cape country and the Transvaal, and a section of the British intelligentsia and civil servants. During the world war and for several years after it, this Party had the Government in its hands; it served exclusively the interests of big capital, caring little for the preservation of a "white South Africa," attacking the white workers, brutally suppressing the strike of the Johannesburg miners in 1922, and advocating close union between South Africa and the British Empire.

After the elections in 1924, when 36 Nationalists and 18 members of the Labour Party were elected as against 53 members of the South African Party, the Pact-parties took office on the strength of a programme which stipulated preservation of a "white South Africa," industrialisation of the country, improvement of the position of the poor and middle peasantry, the white industrial workers and the poor whites, and greater independence of South Africa from British imperialism.

The Pact Government has endeavoured in the last three years to carry out this programme, endeavouring to support industry by the imposition of higher tariffs and subsidies, the establishing of steel works in Pretoria and substituting unskilled natives by poor whites on the railways. It was compelled, however, to give up part of its plans owing to pressure from outside and from the South African Party, and also owing to the growing differences between the two Pact-parties.

Although the Labour Party is a decidedly reformist-imperialist party, close collaboration between it and the Nationalists led to acute differences within the party. When, during recent months, it became evident that the nationalists did not intend to accede to the demands of the workers for the improvement of their conditions, the differences within the party became so acute that a state of disruption can be said to have existed in the Party since the beginning of March, 1928. An open conflict developed between the majority of the Parliamentary fraction and the Central Committee. The opposition, which has the majority behind it, stands for democracy within the party, and the subordination of the Parliamentary fraction to the Central Committee. However, both the opposition and the Parliamentary fraction have expressed themselves in favour of continuing the "Pact" with the Nationalist Party.

The organisation of the white trade union movement is weak, and has only about 100,000 organised workers. 20,000 of these are organised in trade unions affiliated to the "South African Trade Union Congress." Although the Communist Party exer-

else considerable influence over the Executive Committee of the T.U.C., this organisation has not done much more than to express sympathy for the native workers. Although the last congress of the T.U.C. (April, 1927), expressed itself in principle for collaborating with the trade union of the natives, the Industrial and Commercial Union (I.C.U.), nothing has been done in this direction. Neither was a definite decision taken in regard to the labour conciliation Bill introduced by the Government. Although the majority of the Congress expressed itself against collaboration with the employers which was advocated by the Minority, the question of putting up a struggle against the labour conciliation legislation was postponed till the next congress. With regard to international affiliation it was decided unanimously that the Congress should not affiliate to any of the existing Internationals but should support the campaign for *one* Trade Union International.

The trade union of the natives, the "Industrial and Commercial Union" (I.C.U.), which had about 45,000 members at the beginning of 1927, and has carried on an energetic struggle since its formation, is now undergoing a crisis owing to the action of Kadalie, the General Secretary, in expelling three leading Communists from the Executive at the beginning of February, 1927. Kadalie is doing his utmost to transform the I.C.U. into a reformist trade union, working in harmony with the employers and the Government. At first it seemed that Kadalie would succeed, with the support of the British reformists, in carrying out his plans. The Congress of the I.C.U. confirmed the expulsion of the Communists and decided to affiliate to the Amsterdam International and to the Labour Office in Geneva. Kadalie went to Europe and conducted negotiations with the European reformists. On his return to South Africa, he declared his intention of re-organising the I.C.U. with the help of the British trade union leaders, and that it would assume a purely industrial character. However, Kadalie is meeting with strong opposition on the part of the membership in his attempts to reorganise the union.

The "African National Congress" (South African Aborigines) which was hitherto a fairly loose organisation of the various South African native tribes, is developing into a general political organisation of the natives. Communist influence is steadily growing within this organisation, which was also represented at the Brussels conference of the Anti-Imperialist League. The chairman, J. V. Gumede, attended the Congress of the Friends of Soviet Russia, and subsequently toured the U.S.S.R. in order to study the nationalities question. On his return to South Africa, Gumede spoke at a series of meetings and urged the masses to organise themselves on the model of the people of the U.S.S.R. In Johannesburg, speaking at a well attended Party meeting,

Gumede stressed the fact that "only the Communists are on our side; they are the only people who support us."

THE COMMUNIST PARTY.

At the time of its congress in January, 1927, the Communist Party of South Africa had 400 members, including about 50 natives and coloured people. The Party has not yet begun to re-organise itself on a factory basis and is still built up on the system of groups-of-ten. The Party has conducted an energetic campaign in the I.C.U. for a militant class policy and continued its activity even after the expulsion of the leading Communists. The Party has done successful work in the white trade unions and has won several positions in the Executive of the Trade Union Congress. It advocates the re-organisation of the unions into industrial unions and is working for the admission of native and coloured workers and for collaboration with the I.C.U. As a result of Communist influence, the T.U.C. has not affiliated to the Amsterdam International, and the last congress expressed itself in favour of class struggle and against the conciliation legislation. The Party Congress held in January, 1927, discussed thoroughly the anti-native legislation of the Herzog Government and organised the campaign against it, which the Party carried out energetically during 1927. Although the Party was thus able to increase its influence among the natives and to raise its prestige in the African National Congress, one must admit that up to the second half of 1927 this growing influence of the Party was not expressed organisationally. Further, the more advanced elements in the native movement did not join the Party. One of the main reasons for this was the fact that the European Party members, influenced to a certain extent by old traditions, failed fully to appreciate the necessity for the Party to develop into the vanguard of the native masses. However, the renewed persecution of the native leaders by the Government and the manner in which the masses reacted to this persecution, have helped the Party to overcome its prejudices. In the last quarter of 1927 the native masses not only flocked to the meetings and demonstrations organised by the Party, but a good many joined the Party, so that at the present time native members predominate in its ranks. The "South African Worker," of February 17th, 1928, writes as follows on this matter:—"Our Party has been continually explaining to the masses of South Africa that their liberation from oppression and exploitation can only be achieved by means of a militant policy on the part of the members of the native organisations. The reactionary leaders of the I.C.U., who are afraid of the growing fighting spirit of their members, thought that the best way of putting a stop to this was the expulsion of Communists from the organisation. The answer of the masses to this policy was the rapid growth of the Communist

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Party in which at present the natives are in the majority. This growth is particularly rapid in rural districts." The same newspaper publishes a notice of a mass meeting in a rural district which was attended by 2,000 natives. At the end of the meeting several hundred natives, including 63 women joined the Communist Party. The campaign initiated by the Communist Party and the National Congress after the return of the chairman of the African National Congress and of Comrade La Guma from the U.S.S.R., will accelerate this movement.