

The Negro Workers and "Equal Rights and Justice" Under Capitalism

By I. AMTER.

IN a recent issue of the Cleveland Call, a colored paper, there was an editorial entitled "The Colored Citizen and Communism." In this editorial the writer contends that when "other groups like the Socialists demonstrate that they are our most outspoken champions for our rights, the colored man feels that there is something good in their principles and at once becomes susceptible to propaganda."

Furthermore you state that "if those who believe in the present form of government desire to retain the colored citizen's loyalty to this form, they must demonstrate that this form insures him equal rights and justice."

There are fundamental errors in this logic. The latter statement first, that "they must demonstrate that this form insures him equal rights and justice." What position do the Negroes occupy in this country? Of the more than 10,000,000 Negroes, 99 per cent are workers and tenant farmers. Do the workers—black or white—and do the farmers—black, or white—get "equal rights and justice" in this country? This question must be answered with an emphatic negative.

Other Discrimination.

LET us examine some problems of the foreign-born white workers. If he becomes a citizen, he knows that if he fights for the betterment of the condition of the members of his class, he is subject to arrest, indictment as a "bolshhevik" and then deportation. What is his economic position? He is the cheap, unskilled labor employed in the basic industries. It is becoming harder and harder for him to enter the skilled occupations. Colored college students cannot obtain positions after graduation and must accept any kind of unskilled labor. Why this discrimination against the foreign-born and Negro worker? Because the employing class requires a reserve army that may be used to lower the condition of the American workers as a whole. In addition, there is work in the heavy industries—railways, steel, in the packing houses, etc., where cheap labor is required. Who is to do this work? The American will not accept it, hence there must be a large quantity of foreign-born and Negro labor to fill the job.

Up to a year ago, there was a strong current of immigration into this country. Since the farmers have gone thru a crisis, and two millions have migrated to the cities to find work; and since the Negro was found to be potential material for industry, the stream of foreign-born workers into this country has stopped.

The Negro workers now do the "dirty" work in industry, and they will continue to do this work. Can the Negro think that the capitalist will put the Negro on a par with the white workers? Yes, only in one instance, when he needs strikebreakers. The reactionary trade union officials, guarding more the interests of the employers than of the working class, keep the Negroes out of the unions, thus guaranteeing a reserve army for the service of the capitalists.

In an emergency, Negroes can do the work of white workers, since industry has become so mechanical. This emergency is the strike. But should the Negroes, thru pressure get into the trade unions, or thru their own initiative form their own unions, will the situation change under the present system? Not at all. The capitalists will keep up the warfare between the two races in order to keep them apart, just as they breed hatred

between the various nationalities. They know very well that if the working class gets together on a common basis, to fight as workers against the capitalists, the capitalist system will be in serious danger.

What is the position of the native worker? Can one talk of "Equal rights and justice"? Sufficient has been said by our jurists, among them Chief Justice Taft, about the failure of the law toward the "poor man," that is the worker. He cannot carry on in the court as can the capitalist; if he commits a petty offense, he goes to prison, while the rich man escapes. If he commits a major offense, murder, he hangs, while the rich man is declared insane, till a certain time when the whole thing has blown over and he is freed and becomes anew "a respectable member of society." This is inherent in the present system—the laws being made by the capitalist class thru their representatives, for the benefit of the capitalists who are the dominant power in society, owing to their control of the economic and therefore of the political life of the country.

The most powerful dramatization of this fact is a strike. The capitalists use every means possible to break a strike even if it is on fair grounds. The movies, speakers, press, church, and finally the courts, police and militia, all are used by the capitalists "in protection of their rights and their property," while the workers cannot get the protection of the law at all. When, as in West Virginia the miners and their wives prayed before a prison they were sent to jail. When the anthracite miners demanded that the books of the coal operators be opened for public inspection, it was considered unreasonable. When the workers demand the right to organize, it is considered against the "constitutional right of every individual to freedom and to work." When the capitalists, the banks, railroads, food manufacturers, oil companies, etc., etc., combine to monopolize the trade, it is declared a natural development.

No Equal Rights.

HOW can one, in face of these basic facts of the present system of society, the capitalist system, talk of "equal rights and justice"? There is

no justice either for the black or the white worker.

That is the reason that both the white and the black worker is turning toward the Communist movement. It is not because the Communists make any pretences. They show up the sham of the present system of "equal rights and justice." They show the workers, both white and black, that under the present system, they must submit the control of their lives to the capitalist. There can be no "justice" under capitalism—and the Negro worker who suffers most of all, under the present system, in spite of the fact that a civil war was ostensibly fought to "give him equal rights," in spite of the fact that he was promised "equal rights" to enlist in the world war, knows this best of all.

Hence he naturally and logically turns to the revolutionary movement. All attempts to wean him away will only have temporary success. The capitalist system depends on reserve labor, the mechanicalization of industry will reserve the skilled work to the favored few, the aristocrats of labor. The vast majority of the workers will be condemned to perform the mechanical, unskilled work. This process will become ever more extensive with no hope for the broad working masses.

Hence "equal rights and justice" fundamentally incorrect and illusory, no longer deceives large numbers of workers—the blacks above all. These workers lack organization, which will be furnished them by the only ones who see thru the hollowness of the system, and provide a sane state or organizational form for the working class.

The capitalists know this, and instead of bestowing "equal rights and justice" upon the Negro workers and the tenant farmers of the South, they do everything in their power to prevent them from seeking to improve their position by organization. This may intimidate for a time, but soon the conditions will force the Negro, the foreign-born and the oppressed section of the American working class, to organization and united action, economically and politically, as a class to get "equal rights and justice" for their class by getting power.

RED AID CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTEST AGAINST JUGOSLAV TERROR

MOSCOW, U. S. S. R., Feb. 28.—In connection with the terror and the recent events in Jugo-Slavia, the executive committee of the International Red Aid has addressed the following appeal to the workers of all countries:

"The white terror in the Balkans rages with all its old force. The military dictator of Greece, General Pangalos, has followed in the footsteps of the Bulgarian hangman Zankov and his successor Liaptschev Bratianu.

Pangalos Jails Workers.

"General Pangalos has flung the best representatives of the working class into jail and is preparing death sentences and years of hard labor for them.

"In the last few days the terror has again flamed up in Jugo-Slavia with renewed strength. The Pashitch and Raditch government has flung itself with unexampled cruelty upon the working class.

"In the prisons of Belgrade hundreds of workers are subjected to torture. One of these unfortunate workers has already died as a result of the terrible mistreatment which he received. The examination of these workers has been placed completely in the hands of the military camarilla.

"The government intends to destroy the best leaders of the working class by means of bloody terror. The government stops at nothing—beatings

which end in death, tortures to extract 'confessions' which can then be used to make giant processes and to support sentences of death and life terms of hard labor.

Stifle Jugo-Slavia Workers.

"Paschicht hopes in this way to stifle the working class movement in Jugo-Slavia which recently has again begun to grow.

"Comrades, protest against these new murders and tortures of the Jugo-Slavian working class.

"Demand the release of the prisoners.

"The workers of the world must reply to the united front of the hangmen in the Balkans with the united front of all the toilers, the workers and peasants of all countries under the banner of the International Red Association."