The Conspiracy of Silence In Social Democrats' Press

By Rose Wortis

THE ORGANIZED needle trade workers, especially because of their militant traditions and varied national composition, have always been sensitive to political developments in our country and the world. With the bulk of their composition of Jewish, Italian, Negro and Puerto Rican workers, they have been especially alarmed at recent evidence of revival of anti-Semitism, the release of Nazi criminals and the wave of white supremacy propaganda and lynchings (legal and otherwise) that is spreading within the United States.

How do the official publications of the needle trades unions react to those developments? I have reviewed **Justice**, organ of the International Ladies Garment Workers; **Advance**, organ of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and the **Hatworker**, organ of the Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers, for the first four months of this year.

These publications reveal the wide gap between the members and the officialdom.

In going through these publications for the past four months, we do not find a single item on the release of Nazi war criminals.. These omissions are not accidental. They are not an oversight by the editor. It is a deliberate policy.

The mission undertaken by the Jewish rightwing labor leaders is to win the Jewish workers for the Wall Street conspiracy to launch an anti-Soviet war. Their task is to find justification for embracing Hitler's General Staff as partners in this unholy crusade. Agitation against the release of Nazi criminals, against the re-arming of Germany, is in conflict with this policy.

•

THE ILGWU has many thousands of Negro workers among its members. Most of these workers are employed in the unskilled crafts and cheap lower-paid branches of the industry. Their earnings are much lower than those of the white workers.

But when the progressive forces raise any question about the low status of the Negro workers in the industry, they are denounced for stirring up racial discord.

The leadership boasts that there is complete equality in the union for Negro and white. They gloss over the fact that shops under union control in such cities as Baltimore, Kansas City, Atlanta and others continue to maintain jimcrow departments. While the leadership deals with an iron hand against workers who make stoppages for higher prices, they took no stand against a strike instigated in the shop of Brand & Purvis Co. in Kansas City against employment of Negro workers. They close their eyes to situations such as existed in Chicago, where the cotton dress locals 76 and 261, consisting mainly of Negro workers, had no representation on the Joint Board.

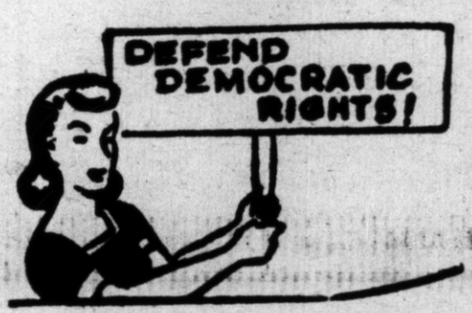
During the past months, our country and the world have been shocked by the dastardly acts against the Negro people—the death sentence against Lt. Leon Gilbert, the court martial of Negro GI's in Korea, the execution of the Martinsville 7, the murder of Willie McGee, the attempted legal lynching of the Trenton 6 (one of these six a brother of Bessie Mitchell a member of Local 22) and the Ku Klux attacks on the Negro people, not only in the south but in such cities as Chicago, the second most important center of the ILGWU and the ACW.

But in the publications of the three needle trades unions you will find not a single line, not a single word of protest against these outrages.

•

THE MAY ISSUE of **Justice** had space for a red-baiting review of a red-baiting book which repeats the old slander about the Communist Party utilizing Negro protests to advance its political ends, but there was not a single word about Willie McGee during the crucial hours of the campaign to save him from the electric chair.

Is this how Dubinsky, Potofsky and Alex Rose, who boast of being on the inside of the Truman administration, use their influence and union strength for the cause of labor and the people?



The April issue of **Justice** prints a report on the financial contributions of the union to humanitarian causes. While the report shows contributions of tens of thousands of dollars to such red-baiting organizations as the Jewish Labor Committee, the **New Leader, Le Populaire** (anti-Communist French paper) the Liberal Party, ADA, etc., it reports a meager contribution of $3,000 to the NAACP, of the grand total of $768,500. None of the numerous Negro organizations, institutions or publications have been beneficiaries of this generosity. The record of the Amalgamated and Hat, Cap and Millinery Workers is no better. These are crimes of omission which the membership of these unions should protest.

•

CONTRAST this record with the record of the **Fur Worker**, published by the International Fur and Leather Workers Union. That journal not only reflects the militant spirit of the workers and the fight for economic conditions, but shows how these interests are tied up with the broader issues, especially the struggle for peace and for full equality.

Its pages are used to rouse and organize the workers against the revival of Nazi Germany, against anti-Semitism, against discrimination. It helped to rally the fur workers against the execution of the Martinsville 7, against police brutality and discrimination against the Negro people. It helped to place the fur workers in the forefront of the fight to save the life of Willie McGee.

It has done much to help break down restrictions against Negro workers in the skilled branches of the trade and to integrate the Negro workers into the union leadership, bringing forward such outstanding Negro leaders as Linden Henry, Pearl Laws and many others.