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# Unions Back Negro Congress Despite Opposing Groups

By JAMES W. FORD

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The National Negro Congress which convenes in Chicago on Feb. 14, has placed as one of its foremost tasks the unionization of Negro labor. A Philip Randolph, the outstanding Negro labor leader in the country, has rendered great service to the Negro people by sponsoring this Congress.

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With clear foresight Randolph sees, as expressed in a recent statement, the need of bringing together the widest possible forces to meet growing reaction and violence against both the Negro people and organized labor as a whole. One has only to remember the murder of the white Socialist leader Shoemaker in Florida, the attempted murder of Ozle Powell, one of the Scottsboro boys, the "accidental" murder of Negro prisoners near Scottsboro, Ala., and the growing reaction represented in the American Liberty League to be alarmed at budding fascism in the country.

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The Negro people stand at the crossroad, and organized labor needs to make solid its ranks to fight reaction and for its right to live.

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By his brilliant fight at the 54th Convention of the American Federation of Labor to get action on a resolution before that body for the organization of Negro workers, Randolph has shown his great value and interest in the organization of Negroes into trade unions, which will lay a firm labor base for the movement of the Negro people as a whole.

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It is an excellent beginning that the Negro Congress places the following point as first and most important to be discussed at the Congress, where there will be broad representation of the Negro people:

The right of Negroes to jobs at decent living wages and for the

right to join all trade unions. For the right to equal wages and equal labor conditions with other workers. For the organization of Negro workers with their fellow white workers into democratically controlled trade unions."

### Crosswaith's Position

In the light of these facts and in view of certain developments that are now taking place in connection with the final drive for the National Negro Congress, it is necessary to raise a few questions for the consideration of trade unions that are interested in the organization of Negro workers and those labor leaders that call themselves friends of Negro labor.

"I have been forced to advise a number of trade unions not to participate in the Negro Congress movement, not that I am against the Congress in principle."

The speaker was Frank R. Crosswaith, Chairman of the Harlem Labor Committee, a leading Negro Socialist and recently elected chairman of the Greater New York Sponsoring Committee for the National Negro Congress. Crosswaith, however, later declined to accept the chairmanship of the Committee, under the plea that he would be too much occupied with the pending strike of the Garment workers.

The occasion of the above statement was a Conference of Communists, Socialists, and sponsors of the National Negro Congress to effect an agreement on broadening the trade union representation in the Congress movement. This meeting was held at the Harlem Labor Center. Those present were: Frank R. Crosswaith, George Sireator, Murray Gross, and Jack Altman of the Socialist Party; Ed Welsh and

Will Herberg, C. P. O.; James W. Ford, A. W. Berry, and Ben Davis, Jr., of the Communist Party, and Miss Miriam Cuthbert and Clifford McLeod for the National Sponsoring Committee.

Crosswaith proposed an amendment to abandon the present proposed Congress as premature. According to the arguments of Crosswaith and those who supported him, there was not sufficient labor participation in the National Negro Congress. He, together with the Lovestoneite representatives, and his Socialist comrades, argued from the viewpoint that "labor" was represented in the community solely by them.

### Lovestoneite Asks to Kill Congress

Streator's contribution was a negative characterization of nearly every one of the more than 250 signers for the Call, stressing the danger of "Republican domination." Impatient to reach an "agreement" to break up the present movement, he switched from "Republican domination" to "the absolute control of the Congress by Communists," and referred to the non-Party persons present as "babes in the woods," "dupes of the Communist Party," etc.

The Communist Party representatives proposed in answer to this stream of provocation that we effect an agreement to:

1. Prevent political domination by any Party.
2. That we get as many trade unions as possible to participate in the Congress.
3. That we work for a Negro Trade Union Conference growing out of the National Negro Congress.

The Communist representatives not only showed up the fallacy of the charges of "Republican" and

"Communist domination," but pledged themselves, wherever they were members of any Committees, to do everything possible to make it possible for Socialists, trade unionists, Communists and all friends of Negro labor to work equally collectively, and unitedly for making the Congress a success.

Will Herberg, inventor of the term "black chauvinism," who once wrote a thesis on the Negro question in which he characterized the American Negroes as "Reserves of reaction" answered consistent with his subtle, white chauvinism: "This Congress is a danger, a menace! Do you mean to say that if Hitler calls a Congress with a good paper program we should support it? I say, let us agree to go to Chicago and kill this Congress, to make possible a good one later on."

Jack Altman's proposal in the beginning of his remarks to go through with the Congress but to jointly cooperate in holding the organization open for widening the labor base in the continuation work of the Congress, was frowned upon. He was forced to withdraw his proposal when he found himself out of step with the other Socialist Party members present.

### Unions Support Congress

That is about how the Conference on Jan. 31, at the Harlem Labor Center to effect a united front agreement ended. The only positive announcement was that the Socialist Party is sending three observers; that the Socialist and C. P. O. representatives would advise organizations not to send delegates, but to send observers.

Since Jan. 31, there have been reliable reports that letters and instructions by Frank R. Crosswaith have been sent to unions urging them not to participate in the Congress.

Despite this, the Teachers Union, the Musicians Union, Local 802, and other unions have elected delegates to go to the Congress. In Chicago, the Amalgamated Meat Cutters, the Butchers, two of the most important unions in the Middle West, have elected delegates.

Among the outstanding trade unionists who will participate in the Congress are: A. Phillip Randolph, who from his sick bed has pledged his unswerving support of the Congress, and advises not only labor organizations, but all organizations of Negro people to actively participate in the Congress; John L. Lewis, and John Fitzpatrick president of the Chicago Federation of Labor, who has agreed to be one of the speakers at the opening session of the Congress in Chicago.

We have enough faith in the Negro masses and the most advanced and best leaders of labor in the country, to foresee and to defeat any reactionary force entering the Congress. How do you stand Comrade Zimmerman?

There is a menace though. The Negro Congress movement which has grown to gigantic proportions in every State of the Union is a real menace for fence-sitters and radical wisecrackers. The masses are demanding unity and action.

We therefore place before our Socialist comrades and trade union friends of Negro labor the question: Are you for unity of action? Are you for the organization of Negroes into trade unions? Are you for doing everything within your power to bring about the widest movement against reaction in this country? Are you for developing a broad movement of the Negro people, led and supported by Negro labor, in the struggle against oppression?

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