

LESSONS OF THE MINERS' STRIKE AND TASKS OF THE N.M.U. AMONG NEGRO MINERS

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II.

Another grave shortcoming of the strike was our failure to concretize our demands for the Negro miners. While our union placed the general demands of the Negro miners in the strike program, no steps were taken to concretize these demands on the basis of their local grievances. Thus the question of segregation in the company patches, discrimination in living conditions within the patches, and types of work given to Negro miners, the denial of the right to occupy skilled and higher paid jobs, the question of relegating Negro to bad entries, the barring of them from certain so-called good mines, and numerous grievances which vary from mine to mine, were not concretely formulated during the strike. The question of concretization of demands is a question around which hinges the difference between reformist and revolutionary tactics. The Negro miner, referred to above, correctly pointed out that the U.M.W.A. fakers also placed in their constitution "no discrimination on account of race, creed or color," which of course does not prevent them from carrying out the most vicious Jim Crow policy in regards to the Negro miners.

The strike offers valuable lessons in regard to the building up of the mass circulation of the Liberator. The paper was received enthusiastically by both Negro and white miners and used successfully in gaining wider contacts among the Negro miners for the strike and the union. However, this broader role of the Liberator was not at first fully appreciated as witnessed in our failure to organize its systematic distribution, and to make a beginning in the work of building up a mass circulation of the Liberator in the mining fields. A smashing blow, therefore, was given to the tendency to regard this paper as merely an organizer for the L.S.N.R. and failing to see its broader role as an organizer for our mass organizations, union, unemployed councils, etc., among the Negro workers.

In connection with these main shortcomings a number of additional weaknesses must be registered, not one special leaflet was distributed among the Negro miners who remained at work, explaining to them why they should join the strike; no special discussion on the Negro question was organized in the local union during the course of the strike, etc., etc.

All of these shortcomings can be largely attributed to our failure to place the work among Negroes on an organized basis. Only at a relatively late stage in the strike, in fact when the strike wave was already on the ebb, did we set

up a Negro Department in the Union and work out a concrete program for the development of this work.

This program, adopted by the Central Rank and File Strike Committee, has until now been but weakly put into operation.

At the present time, the union is faced with the tasks of overcoming its isolation and intrenching itself in the mines among the main masses of miners who have been driven back to work. Under these conditions, it is urgently

The Fight Against the War Danger

Nevertheless it must be stated that the intensity of the struggle against the danger of war and against the danger of intervention against the USSR does not all correspond to the intensity with which the imperialists are preparing for war against the USSR. The agitation against the war danger is not carried on systematically, and in many cases only from campaign to campaign. The fundamental weakness of the work of the Communists is that the concrete measures being taken in preparation for war in parliamentary commissions, in the imperialist armies and in the war industries, are not sufficiently exposed to the masses. The Communist Parties have not yet learned how to explain to the masses sufficiently clearly the connection that exists between the war preparation of the imperialists and the growth of the exploitation of the oppressed masses. They have not yet learned how to expose by concrete illustrations the fact that social democracy is the support of imperialism in the preparation for counter-revolutionary war against the USSR.

necessary to carry into effect the following main tasks:

1. The concretization of the demands of the Negro miners on the basis of the local conditions in each mine. To conduct a real struggle against any attempts of the coal operators to victimize Negro miners for strike activities by placing our demands of "no discrimination of militant Negro miners" as a condition in local strike settlements.

2. The organization of mass actions for the smashing of Jim Crow laws and customs in mining committees. (The Pittsburgh Party district proposes to organize broad united front anti-Jim-Crow conferences on a section basis, picking out in this respect two sections where Jim Crowism is most rampant. These to be called under the joint auspices of the NMU, MWIL and LSNR, will have the task of organ-