

SOUTH AFRICA: REFORMISTS BETRAY STRIKE.

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Although the South African Trade Union Congress is not affiliated to the Amsterdam International, its reformist and treacherous character certainly makes it eligible for a place in this international scab corporation. Completely ignoring the millions of native and colored

workers, the Trade Union Congress embraces only white workers. It upholds the privileged position of the white workers, thus helping the capitalist class to divide the ranks of the working class movement, fostering race hatred and white chauvinism. The true nature of South African Reformism was seen especially during the strike of the colored mattress workers last November.

The Mattress Workers' Union is a militant organisation affiliated to the RILU through the Non-European Trade Union Federation. Like the whole Federation, this organisation has supported a revolutionary class platform since it was organised and has ever since pushed forward the tactics of the united front to fight the employing class. An agreement of Friendship and Mutual Support was soon closed with the Furniture Makers' Union, a reformist organisation of white workers. The class union made clear that it really meant business. When the white workers came out in Johannesburg last October, the colored mattress workers took part in the white workers' meeting and declared from the platform that they were prepared to call a solidarity strike as soon as necessary. This fine demonstration of class solidarity by the workers of another race had its influence and the strike was won after a short bout.

This victory was instrumental in raising the class consciousness of all the workers for it was evident at last that the "color bar" which had always divided them, had been broken down. But these hopes proved all too premature. Far from any class consciousness, the reformists hadn't even the decency or the desire to carry out the obligations they had undertaken. On November 18th, the colored mattress workers called a strike when the employers refused to pay them the rates fixed by the Wages Board. The employers claimed that these wage rates applied only to the white workers. All the strikers were arrested at the first General Meeting, for South African law lays down that it is a criminal offense for any native worker to leave his job before the termination of his contract (strikes being brought under this ruling). One would have expected that the Furniture Makers' Union should have welcomed an opportunity of helping a union which only recently had rendered such invaluable support. As an affiliated body to the Trade Union Congress, it should have raised the question in the TU centre of organising a campaign of protest against the continuance of the present slave laws.

But the reformists had no intention of doing this for they were all too busy scabbing at the factories involved in the dispute. Of course, this piece of treachery only embittered the colored workers and unfortunately increased racial antagonism. We cannot pass over the blunders committed by the "South African Worker", the paper of the CP, in an article exposing the treachery of the reformists. The whole article speaks about the white workers and not about the reformists, which simply gives emphasis to racial distinctions, completely ignoring the ideological side of the question. This can only play into the hands of the employers who will continue to keep the white and the colored workers at loggerheads simply to be able to exploit both. It is high time that things were made clear in the ranks of the class conscious workers. We must make clear that the present treachery of working class interests has its roots in reformism, and not because the workers happen to be white, for we see the reformists betraying their fellow-workers in all parts of the world, in Europe, Africa, and Asia, wherever you have class conscious and reformist workers belonging to the same place and even to the same nation. To bring home the true situation to the workers will be all the easier since there are many white workers in South Africa who are struggling jointly with the colored workers.

Why, the recent piece of treachery even prompted several officials to leave their jobs in the Furniture Makers' Union. The Mattress Workers' Union, and, indeed, all the organisations affiliated to the Trade Union Federation must now raise the question of organising class unions which would unite all the workers irrespective of color, face or religion.

The Federation as a whole and each one of its affiliated unions should now push forward educational activities to raise the class consciousness of the members and familiarise them better with the international labor movement. Our Negro comrades will then realise that no matter where you look the class conscious workers are struggling against the reformists. Everywhere the reformist leaders are becoming the open agents of the capitalists; the reformist unions are turning into fascist organisations. In South Africa the racial problem overshadows the class struggle and it is up to our unions to clear the atmosphere. Every native worker should realise that the Kadalies, the Andrews and the Ballingers, for example are working against the working class interests, that they are directly supporting the capitalist class although they use different methods to achieve this. South Africa stands on the eve of a serious wave of class struggles, and a correct lead can only be given if we have a clear working class policy.

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