

SOUTH AFRICA

Trade Unions and the I.F.T.U.

IN South Africa there exist organisations for white workers which no coloured worker can join, and there are also special organisations of coloured workers. At the head of the white organisations is the *South African Trades Union Congress* with a membership of 20,000, while the organisations of the coloured workers are bound together by the "Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers," which has a membership of 30,000 to 40,000 workers.

The South African Trades Union Congress

A few years ago the South African Industrial Federation (which is now defunct) joined the Amsterdam International. In its day it was the organisation of the white workers, but although it had ceased to exist its name remained on the books of the Amsterdam International.

Now at the 1926 Congress of the South African T.U.C. (white workers) the question of this affiliation to the Amsterdam International was reopened, and a resolution was passed emphasising the fact that the T.U.C. was not affiliated to an international organisation, and demanding that the Amster-

dam International take its name from the lists. In answer to the demand the following original reply came from Amsterdam :—

We cannot carry out your wish . . . because an organisation can only be struck off the lists of the Amsterdam International after a resolution has been passed by a competent authority of that organisation.

It thus follows that in order that the South African T.U.C. may be struck off the lists of the Amsterdam International, the old "Industrial Federation" must be resuscitated! Amsterdam's answer needs no comment. It has had the opportunity of entering in relations with another Trade Union Centre which, in the person of its leader, shows itself better disposed towards relations with Amsterdam. Let us consider the circumstances of Amsterdam's change of front.

The Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers (I.C.U.)

The membership of this organisation consists of both native and immigrant coloured workers. Until recently it was a revolutionary organisation, pursuing a militant class-war policy, standing to the left of the South African T.U.C. (white workers), and having, amongst its leading officials, several Communists. At the last conference it was decided to endeavour to enter into relations with the British T.U.C.

It must, however, be admitted that at the national conference of the Union the reformists quantitatively achieved a success. They waged a heated war on the Communists in order to obtain complete hold of the trade union machinery, and then changed the goal from class-war to that of class-collaboration. By means of various intrigues the reformists have rooted themselves to the organisation.

Already in November of last year it became known that the I.C.U. had expressed a desire to become affiliated to the Amsterdam International. Militant workers at once protested and pointed out the incompatibility of the revolutionary colonial workers with the reformist Amsterdam International. But the Press Report of the I.F.T.U. showed that application for affiliation had already been received from the I.C.U.

The reformist leaders, of course, could not wangle the entry into the Amsterdam International without a fight. The Communists opposed the move to their utmost, and, naturally, the reformists have done everything possible to exclude them from the Union. On December 16, at Port Elizabeth, a national meeting of the Union was called. Kadalie attacked the Communist Party, and urged the refusal of an invitation to the Brussels Anti-Imperialist Conference, which was a "Bolshevik affair, financed from Moscow." Kadalie's proposals were accepted (only thirteen people took part in the meeting), and the three Communists who had leading posts in the Union were sacked after refusing to desert their party. It was also decided to ignore the Brussels Conference.

Since then it has been interesting to find in the London *Lansbury's Weekly* an article by Kadalie in which the Brussels Conference against Colonial Repression (Lansbury was chairman) was bitterly attacked.

With the Communists and militants thus shut out from the union, relations with the Amsterdam International were much easier, and the

International decided on recommending the entry of the Union into its respectable fold.

The result is that the Union of Industrial and Commercial Workers is taking the place of the old Industrial Federation (as the *New Statesman* pointed out), and the good feeling that exists between Amsterdam and the coloured workers is explained by the fact that "*the new trade union leaders are really more moderate than the white South Africans.*"

Kadalie now declares that "the Union is a right-thinking organisation," that "strikes are a weakening, useless, old-fashioned method of fighting," and the Union can only achieve its end by constitutional means. He declares that if he were "by chance" deprived of his work in the Union he would "immediately build up a separate organisation," and so achieve his end nevertheless.

The campaign of Kadalie and Co. against the Communists continues. Not only single members, but whole sections are expelled from the Union if they oppose the "Clear out the Reds" campaign.

The question of unity between the white and the coloured workers has not been broached from either side. The white unions are averse from the proposal of unity, and while formerly the coloured unions supported unity the position to-day, with Kadalie as leader, is uncertain.

The Congress of White Unions

The Annual Congress took place in April, the agenda of which contained the following points :—

- (1) Relations with I.L.O. in Geneva. The E.C. asked the organisations whether the I.L.O. should be combated or supported.
- (2) Declaration of solidarity with workers and peasants of China. The E.C. proposed an appeal to the workers in favour of the recognition of the rights of all oppressed colonial peoples, and a demand for self-determination.
- (3) The trade unions must exercise pressure on the Government to bring about a simplification and improvement of the methods of working the Arbitration Commission.
- (4) *Unemployment.* The Congress wishes to put the following demands to the Government :—
 - (a) A maximum working week for all workers of 44 hours.
 - (b) State employment bureaus to work only under the wage rates of the trade unions.
 - (c) The subsidising of single industries to go only so far as is necessary to maintain in those industries the present demand for labour.
 - (d) Compulsory regulation of apprenticeships.
- (5) *Organisation.* The E.C. proposed the following :—
 - (a) Unification of all trade unions in South Africa into one Federation.
 - (b) Reorganisation of unions on the basis of industry.
 - (c) Fight for the acknowledgment of trade unions by the Government in the direction of all technical institutions, technical schools, &c

The previous Congress carried a resolution in favour of one single trade union international, and in support of the Anglo-Russian Committee. The agenda of this year's Congress did not contain a single reference to the unity of the international trade union movement.

The question of the I.L.O. only gained interest after the I.C.U. had affiliated to the Amsterdam International, and had also decided to send Kadalie to Geneva as a representative of the whole of the working class of South Africa. *Forward*, the organ of the white workers' unions, wrote in this connection that Kadalie would not represent the interests of the workers but the capitalists, and that the T.U.C. could not have connections with the I.L.O., as it was a capitalist organisation.

The organisation took its stand at the Brussels Conference against the oppression of colonial peoples. The motion of the executive recognising the rights of colonial peoples and to demand self-determination marks a step forward.

As appears from the last report of the party conference of the C.P.S.A. the influence of the Communists in the trade unions (white workers) has grown. Thirty trade union delegates took part in the party conference.