A REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS AND DECISIONS
OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF NEGRO WORKERS

AT HAMBURG GERMANY / JULY 1930

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COMMITTEE OF NEGRO WORKERS
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Report of Proceedings and Decisions of the First International Conference of Negro Workers

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responsible for Convening the Conference

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E. Small, West Africa
W. Bile, Cameroon
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Group of Delegates in attendance at the First International Conference of Negro Workers — Hamburg, Germany, July 7, 8, 1930
PART I
ELECTION OF PRESIDIUM AND GREETINGS

Presidium:
- J. W. Ford, United States of America
- Frank Macaulay, Nigeria, West Africa
- E. Richards, Sierra Leone, West Africa
- E. F. Small, Gambia, West Africa
- M. De Leon, Jamaica, West Indies.

Honorary members:
(Imprisoned or waiting conviction for activities connected with struggles of Negro Toilers)
- Harry Thuku, Kenya, East Africa
- Albert Nzulu, South Africa
- E. Story, Atlanta, Ga., USA
- Herbert Newton, Atlanta, Ga., USA

Agenda:
1. Report of the International Committee of Negro Workers — Chairman
2. Economic Struggles and Tasks of the Negro Workers — George Padmore
3. The Struggle against Forced Labour and Poll Tax — William Wilson
4. The War Danger and its Significance to the Negro Masses — Frank Macaulay
5. Resolutions

Greetings:
Telegram: July 7, 1930
"International Sports Opposition Worker Athletes' meeting at Dresden, Germany, sends proletarian greetings to the First International Conference of Negro Workers, urging it to fulfill historic task of uniting oppressed Negro millions all over the world against imperialism."
Signed: "International Red Sports."

Telegram: July 8, 1930
"Proletarian Congress (Manila) greets Negro Worker's Conference, wishing success which strengthens united front of oppressed masses in
their fight for national class liberation. Fight imperialist War! Defend the Soviet Union and colonial freedom!"

Signed: "Evangelista, General Secretary, Manila, Philippine Islands."

Red International of Labour Unions (R. I. L. U.)

July 1, 1930.

The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers of the Red International of Labour Unions sends heartiest, revolutionary greetings to the First International Conference of Negro Workers.

Your Conference is destined to organise the Negro workers who form the vanguard of the broad toiling masses of the Negro peoples who are raising the standard of struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

The capitalist world is plainly breaking up. The experience of the working class of the USSR shows that only the destruction of private property right over the soil, the means of production and distribution, only the overthrow of the power of the bourgeoisie, and the formation of a worker-peasant government will secure real brotherhood and social equality for the toilers of all races and nations.

Shoulder to shoulder in the bonds of brotherhood that link the working masses, black, yellow, and white in their fight against the capitalist and their reformist agents, we will destroy the system of oppression, exploitation, and lack of right for the workers, and build up the Socialist Society which alone will bring the Negro toilers complete national and social emancipation.

Away with the imperialists and their agents in our workers' midst!
Down with racial antagonism and the colour bar!
Up the United Front of the workers and the oppressed masses!
Forward, the revolutionary labour movement, friend and ally of the oppressed races and nations!

RILU International Negro Workers' TU Committee.

Letter:

June 25, 1930.

Japanese Section of League Against Imperialism.

To the esteemed comrades meeting for the first world congress of Negro workers:

"We, the Japanese section of the League Against Imperialism send sincere and hearty greetings of international solidarity to the Negro workers and peasants, who fight against the oppression and exploitation of the imperialists.

"Comrades.

"All the imperialists' strength is being used in the preparation of a new imperialist war, whose victims will be the workers of the whole world and that strength will be directed at the U. S. S. R. The last peace conference held in London was only to re-shape the war provisions and also to discuss the most modern warfare knowledge, and although an attempt was made to impress the whole world of the anti-war nature of the meeting, we were not deceived.
"Comrades,

"The Imperialists divide and rule. The Japanese imperialists by their strength use the workers and peasants against the colonials and forces racial feelings, with the result, instead of unity, we find hatred.

"Cruel white terror often destroys revolutionary organizations, but nevertheless, long continued strikes and peasant risings very often occur, and the revolutionary workers' and peasants' movement develops with active rapidity.

"The Japanese workers and peasants fight as your brothers and sisters in the East, whilst strengthening the unity between colonial and semi-colonial people in Korea, Formoso and China.

"Comrades,

"We see the Negro workers in Africa heroically fighting; the independent movement in India develops and these give new life to the Chinese workers to go forward and try again to overthrow their oppressors.

"The first world conference of Negro workers strengthens and hastens the time when the revolutionary movement of the oppressed, pushes itself forward to the final conquest of the world revolution. From the East, we strongly shake hands with our Negro workers and wish you the best of luck."

Signed: "Japanese Section of League Against Imperialism.
K. Tsuboi, sec."

PART II
REPORT OF CHAIRMAN

Report of Comrade Ford

"Comrades:

We are meeting at a time of acute crisis of capitalism that has reached throughout the world most seriously affecting colonial lands. We have before us very big tasks. We must face the serious business of getting down to the problems that face the Negro workers and the Negro race under capitalist exploitation and oppression in the various parts of world. We are gathered here at this conference for that purpose. This conference must make a broad political demonstration and broadcast to the widest possible masses of Negro toilers the results of our discussions. We must take up organizational questions relating to the economic situation and working conditions of the Negro workers — industrial and agricultural workers; we must discuss lynching, terrorism, police and soldier massacres, pass-laws and restrictions, racial discriminations, forced labour, the coming imperialist war and a number of other questions and problems. We will of course have to reach some decisions, but these decisions should not, because of the provisional character of our coming together and because of the fact that this conference is not as broad as we had hoped it would be, have to be of a binding character on the delegates here. We are here for no political controversies. We are of many political faiths here to discuss openly and frankly the situation of the Negro workers as it actually is in the world today and to discuss and to study the affects of capitalist exploitation and imperialist oppression upon the Negro masses — and I think we can all
agree despite what others may say that the deplorable conditions of the Negroes grow out of the capitalist system of exploitation. We are here to discuss the role of the Negro workers in the international labour movement. It is under these conditions, comrades, that I bring greetings to the representatives of the Negro workers — as well as to the fraternal representatives of the other races here — from the Provisional International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers that has convened this First International Conference of Negro Workers. In order to get down to these problems I would say that we must discuss the present world situation and the past which is also heavy upon the memory of the Negro toilers. What in general outline are the questions that we must take up? (1) Briefly the economic and political situation through which the capitalist world has been passing during recent years. (2) The position and conditions of the Negro workers and the Negro race under capitalism — Negro oppression and the freedom of the Negro race. In discussing these questions we will naturally come to the significance and importance of this conference of workers. I assure comrades that the capitalists are looking with very great concern upon our efforts and the Negro workers expect much.

I.

In-so-far as we can deal with dates I will start with the period beginning around 1928. At that time great rivalries between the leading imperialist powers (and in the first place between the USA and Great Britain) were very acute and strained. Why? First, there was the question of redividing the world between themselves in order to make greater profits, especially to redivide the colonial and foreign markets, where they might sell their goods and send their money for investment and inhuman exploitation. As there can be no "gentlemanly" agreements about such things these rivalries led the USA and Britain, as well as the other imperialist nations into a race of war preparations, military alliance, etc. Imperialist war is how they try to settle such matters. And as I have said the USA is pushing Great Britain hard for financial supremacy, German bourgeoisie want back their lost colonies, France and Japan, too, want more world markets and colonial lands.

Secondly, in order to make financial and economic preparations for redividing the world and profits, it was necessary for these imperialist nations to create powerful and great centralized financial combines, of which we hear so much, and to create international trusts, etc. But in order to carry this through and because of the keen competition for profit for themselves, it was necessary, first, for them to begin to do it at the expense of the workers in the capitalist countries, by speeding them up, by introducing new machinery, both of which made it possible to increase the production of goods. But this threw thousands of workers out of jobs and meanwhile there began the of slashing wages right and left. This super abundance of goods had to find a market, because the workers could not buy them, so therefore the bitter struggle for foreign markets and colonial lands.

On top of this naturally there began a more intense struggle of the workers against capitalist exploitation.

Thirdly. I could name you a whole series of evidences of how the capitalists began to reduce the standards of the workers in every country, reduce wages, increase the hours of work, to throw thousands of work-
ers on the streets, and how with the aid of their police, soldiers and capitalist courts they beat back the workers; and last but not the least of significance, how the reformist trade union officials and organizations helped the bosses against the workers — the American Federation of Labor, the Amsterdam International and so on. But I will not take your time to point out one by one these cases. I merely want to point out the leading facts.

It was natural that the workers would become rebellious against these conditions in order to protect themselves and their standards, would turn away from the reformist trade unions in great numbers and begin aggressive battles against the capitalists.

Fourthly. Now let us take a look at the other side of the world — the colonial world, here is where capitalism is doing its best to perpetuate slavery to relieve its burdens. In order to help their attacks against the workers at home and to make super profits the capitalists send their capital to colonial countries. And when you, especially you from the colonial lands of Africa and the West Indies who know the condition of slavery under which the toilers there on every hand are working and living, their already low standards of living, the racial abuse and so on, you can readily understand how the capitalists manipulate things in order to get this cheap labour to compete with the workers at home and to make for them super profits. They took their up-to-date machinery and their new standards of production and this combined with the already cheap standard of labour they produce goods at a tremendous low rate — take China, take India, take Indonesia, take Korea and Latin America, take the forcible industrialization of the African masses who thru poll and hut taxes and other forms of taxation are forced off their lands to become industrial slaves for the imperialists, and take the United States where the capitalists have an internal army of millions of Negro toilers who are no less exploited and on whose labour billions in profits are piled up.

Now take the role of the reformist organizations (AFL, Amsterdam, the General Council, the Independent Labour Party and the British Labour Party of England) who as they do in the imperialist countries, the same they do in the colonies — help the imperialists in the exploitation of the colonial workers. This comrades is a brief outline of the situation.

I started out by saying that this was the situation at the beginning of 1928. Now in March of 1928, the Fourth Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), took place at Moscow. I was a delegate at this Congress from the Trade Union Educational League of the USA (Now Trade Union Unity League) representative of the Negro workers, for the first time a delegate at such a Congress, and for three weeks heard and participated in discussing the problems which I have already related, and saw the tasks outlined for the workers' struggles. I could not help being tremendously impressed with how the problems of the workers were handled, especially how directly they were in interest of the workers, workers from every land and every race. The question of the Negro workers was taken up in some detail. But before I take up this question I want to tell you briefly how the Congress worked. This may be of some help to us here in our deliberations. I have already touched on some of these questions. Now I want to touch on how the discussion centered around what to fight for and how to fight for it.
a) In the first place it was pointed that the workers in order to counteract the capitalist rationalization and offensive and fight the capitalist system they must fight for a shorter working day — the 7 hour day and against the taking away of the 8 hour day where it has been gained; for higher wages; against overtime; for a minimum two week holiday with full pay and a month’s holiday for workers in heavy and dangerous work; special demands for young workers and women workers, etc., b) that the most stubborn struggle must be made against the reformist trade union officials of whatever stripe (and we shall see that this will apply to the Negro reformist fakers equally as much); that in the course of the struggles which are ahead new strike methods must be applied — such as day to day preparation and organization of the working masses for struggle, during strikes everything must be done against the will of the reformists; the participation of the widest mass of workers in the drawing up of strike demands; the forming of broad strike committees to lead strikes; and the extending of the economic fight, for wages and working conditions, etc., into a fight against the repressive measures and the state apparatus of the bosses — a political struggle against the whole capitalist system. c) The tremendous difference in the situation of the workers in the Workers’ and Peasants’ State, the Soviet Union, was pointed out and contrasted with the deplorable situation of the workers in the capitalist countries as a result of the capitalist system, and the inhuman exploitation and treatment of the oppressed colonial peoples under imperialism — how in the USSR rationalization means the reduction of the hours of work of the workers, increase in wages, better working conditions, the reduction of unemployment to nothing, the raising of the cultural level of the workers and the broad freedom and self determination of the oppressed (under the czar) nationalities and minorities and finally the fact that the Workers’ state is ruling over one-sixth of the earth, and that its very existence divides the world into two camps — on the one hand the capitalist world and on the other hand the Workers’ State, the ardent friend and ally of the workers and oppressed peoples throughout the world. That is why there is such great hatred by the capitalists for the USSR and why war is being prepared against it, d) there came the question of international solidarity and the strengthening of the world international trade union movement. Unlike Amsterdam International and its Congresses — the world for the RILU did not consist alone of America and Europe and of only the upper strata of the working class in these countries — the world for the RILU extended throughout the whole geographical area of the earth into the colonial lands, and not only of the upper strata of workers, but to the lowest strata, the unorganized who are betrayed by the reformists and who they refuse to organize even of white workers in Europe and America. The RILU pointed out how the capitalists use the colonial workers against the workers in the capitalist countries, how they used the unorganized against the organized and therefore how the reformists betray the workers by their attitude to the colonial workers and to the unorganized workers, how the reformists were weakening the struggle of the workers against the capitalists. The RILU had already established contact with the colonial workers through the Pan-Pacific Secretariat and the Latin America Secretariat and had made direct contact with the Negro workers of South Africa. The RILU did not look down upon Negro and coloured workers as dispensable people as the Amsterdam
International does. This was how the RILU was creating the real International and establishing International solidarity.

And now comrades this brings me directly to the Negro question as taken up at the 4th Congress of the RILU. While discussing the activities of sections in the USA, France, Britain and South Africa and their tasks amongst the Negro workers, special attention was paid to the Negro workers. It was found however that there had been many weaknesses in these sections in their work amongst Negroes. It was necessary therefore to give consideration to the setting up of a special trade union committee of Negro workers. But long before the 4th Congress the Negro question had received serious attention in the Executive Bureau of the RILU. The Congress decided that the Executive Bureau should call a conference of Negro workers to work out plans to enliven work amongst Negroes. In July of 1928 it convened a Conference of delegates from countries with a Negro population who had come to the 6th World Congress of the Communist International. After careful consideration it was decided to create an International Trade Union Committee of Negro workers at the RILU and charged it with the task of drawing Negro workers into the existing trade unions, of further creating new unions and of unifying the wide masses of Negro workers on the basis of the class struggle. This was started. We did much work, published bulletins and issued other materials, we stimulated work amongst Negro workers in the various countries. But of course sufficient was not done. During July of 1929 I was a delegate representing the Committee at the 2nd World Congress of the League Against Imperialism held at Frankfort, Germany, and while there took the opportunity to call a few meetings in the name of our committee of all the Negro delegates who had come for the Congress of the League Against Imperialism (from USA, West Indies and Africa). Aside from the special questions taken up at the Congress of the League, in our meetings held in the corridors of the meeting hall, we discussed the problems and the question of trade union organization amongst the Negro workers. We decided that an International Conference of Negro workers for this purpose should be called. A Provisional Committee was elected for this purpose. This Conference today is the results of our work. I will not go into the details of how we carried on our work, of the difficulties encountered, these are already well known to many of you here and other facts will come out later. I want to go comrades to the second part of my report and that is the question of the situation of the Negro workers under capitalism.

II.

Now comrades we Negroes can not forget the result of the affects of the past upon us — the fact that for over 300 years over 100,000,000 Negroes were torn from the shores of Africa to be brought into the slave markets of the new world, America and the West Indies by the capitalists and their agents and that on the basis of Negro slavery and slave labour they built up their capitalist power and wealth — and we must ask, during these 300 years or during these last 100 years or during this day and time, what has it brought us? Not only during this period of slave traffic did it bring untold misery, this is a question we are familiar with, but it left us everywhere in ignorance and degradation, and despite the boast of a small upper strata of Negroes in the USA and other places,
the facts are that the great masses of Negroes the world over were brought up in ignorance, were left in ignorance and degradation by deliberate persecutions and limitations designed to perpetuate and keep them pawns and slaves to capitalist exploitation. The greatest misery and most inhuman forms of exploitation exist.

Today our disguised slavery is forced labour in all parts of Africa, peonage and forced labour in the USA and the West Indies; chaingangism, compound life, enforced by pass laws, curfew regulations, discriminations and racial restrictions of every kind, super imposed and made more "disguised" by religion and other dope through missionaries, preachers, YMCA men and other dope peddlers.

Not satisfied with this they have drowned hundreds of thousands of natives in blood with their colonial troops and police wherever there has been the least resistance to this system. In the USA during the last 35 years over 3,000 Negroes have been alone lynched by burning and other means. Comrades, these are the facts. Are there more? Yes. Remember the bloody reign of king Leopold of Belgium in the Belgian Congo, the French imperialists in Central Africa and the Congo, the destruction of the Zulus in South Africa by the combined British and Boers; the shooting down of natives in Haiti by the hundreds by the USA marines, the transportation by the Portuguese, of natives from East Africa as forced labourers many of whom died on the way.

During the Imperialist World War France, England, Germany, USA used hundreds of thousands of Negro troops in their imperialist armies, and thousands were slaughtered on the altar of imperialism. Despite the hypocritical promises of "Equality, Fraternity and Liberty", "make the world safe for small minorities", "God Save the Kings' Land" and so on, since that war we see, our exploitation and oppression goes on in a more intensified manner and form under every imperialist power.

But during the war we learnt some things. Many of us first of all learnt the class nature of the imperialist war, that the war was fought for the imperialist powers, that they fought among other things to subjugate colonial lands, to further exploit colonial peoples. That the white workers too were murdered (by each other) for the imperialists, we saw during the course of this war that the revolutionary workers overthrew capitalism in one country — in Russia — and that a Workers' and Peasants' state was set up and rules today. We have learned comrades that in order for us to gain our freedom we must also organize our forces for a struggle against imperialism and capitalism.

The fact that the imperialists set up racial barriers between black and white workers on the basis of chauvinism in order to divide the working class interest, forces us to fight harder for a united front of workers the world over, and by increasing our class consciousness, strengthen the revolutionary forces to fight to overthrow imperialism.

We are at this moment in a position to do this and have the forces on which we can base our work. The war created a big army of Negro workers, in South Africa, in West Africa, in the West Indies, in the USA — millions of Negro proletarians. It is the Negro workers brought up in capitalist industry (just as the white workers have been brought up), who find from bitter experience the need for struggle against capitalism, that have the stability, the courage, the discipline and that are class conscious on which to effectively organize their forces.
It is on the basis of the class consciousness of the Negro workers in the industrial centers who jointly with the agricultural workers (whom they must assist in organization) that contact must be made with the villages and peasant farms and join hands with the peasant toilers and lead a combined struggle against their oppressors. It is only these forces comrades that can lead the struggle for the liberation of the whole Negro race.

The Negro middle class, intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie have shown and will further show that they are not only incapable of struggle against capitalism but that making a pretence of racial interest they actually combine their forces with the growing Negro bourgeoisie for Negro capitalist aims, Negro capitalism, and that they all will betray the interest of the Negro workers, the majority of the Negro race, to the big white bourgeoisie. We shall see later in our discussion here how the Professors and doctors like G. E. Haynes, William Pickens, Dr. DuBois and a host of others betray the interest of the Negro workers, of how, many native chiefs in Africa betray the natives into the hands of the imperialists, especially in Central Africa and West Africa; and also of Garveyism, of how Garveyism on bourgeoisie nationalism playing on the mutual racial interest of the Negro race, is not only designed to build up a black capitalist group but actually to betray the masses of Negro workers to the imperialists. Comrades I only touch on these points because they will be discussed in detail later.

Now what are the prospects, what are the evidences of the growing class consciousness of the Negro workers throughout the world and their capacity to lead the struggles of the Negro race?

Everywhere comrades we see capitalism the world over in the grips of a severe crisis — we see the capitalists reducing the wages of the workers, their standards of living, speeding them up in order to place the burden of the crisis on the backs of the workers, we see unemployment increasing throughout the world, we find that alone in the USA, of the 6 or more millions of unemployed workers, at least 500,000 are Negro workers who are faced with starvation, the same in South Africa, in the West Indies and so on. The imperialists are trying to place the burden of this crisis especially on the backs of the colonial people and on the backs of the natives of Africa — in all the parliaments the social democrats are helping the capitalists by voting special measures and bills for the more intense exploitation of the workers in these lands.

Now in every capitalist country the workers are fighting against this capitalist crisis by street fighting and by mass demonstrations. There is a militant struggle of workers everywhere. The Indian revolution is rising, the Chinese workers are building a Red Army and have established a Soviet of workers and peasants in a large section of China. To this, notice must be taken of the struggles of the Negro workers. Big and serious struggles of the Negro working masses have taken place against capitalist exploitation in different parts of Africa, the West Indies and the USA during the last period, of which you will report on here. But let me review briefly these (and this is the key note, we must strike here).

French Equatorial Africa. This colony is especially exploited by the French militarists owing to its wealth. The system of concessions made the native population practically the slaves of the French companies and the impossible conditions of living and of work led to the extinction of
the natives. The population decreased by almost 75% during the French rule. The construction of a railway running from Brazzaville, the capital of the colony, to the seashore was an exceptionally heavy burden on the natives. The greed of the concessionaires who undertook the construction of the railway resulted in the death of about 20,000 natives during the eight years of construction (1921—1928). A revolt setting on fire almost the whole country broke out in November 1928 in connection with the new drafts of workers for the construction of the railway. The revolt continued for more than three months and considerable military forces had to be sent out to suppress it. The result of this was that the construction was very small and that attempts were made to substitute "coolies" imported from Indo-China for the native workers.

A serious movement of the natives exists also in Madagascar; the movement in May 1929 grew into a tremendous demonstration under the leadership of the Communist Party. Many demonstrators were arrested and brought before court which treated two of the Communist leaders especially harsh. One of them — Black — was sentenced to 5½ years, and the other one to 3½ years.

The most important branch of the industry of Guadeloupe, one of the West Indian Islands, belonging to France, is the sugar industry. In connection with the fall of prices on the world sugar market the capitalists intensified the exploitation of the workers in order to shift onto their shoulders the whole burden of the crisis. The workers answered with a big strike in February 1930. The strikers and the police fought pitched battles. Several workers were killed and many wounded. The revolutionary movement gained new force after the death of these workers. The French administration was obliged to call for police from the neighbouring Island of Martinique in order to suppress the revolt.

Serious disturbances took place in Nigeria in December 1929, women workers playing a very important part in them. During the suppression of the disturbances by the soldiery 44 women were among the total number killed. The disturbances were a protest against the introduction of a head tax among the women. This new tax burden is a further step to confiscate the lands of the natives. Though the administration very quickly settled the affairs and even compelled the population to pay a very high contribution in compensation for (pretended) losses suffered by the Europeans, the situation is still dangerous and the tribal chiefs are obliged to ask for defense against their own tribesmen who understand quite well that their headmen had sold themselves to the enemy and were agents of imperialism.

The principal wealth of Gambia situated on the Western Coast of Africa are peanuts and oil palms. As oil produced from both these plants is very important for the margarine and soap industries it is quite easily to be understood why the colony is entirely in the hands of an international margarine concern, which is the undisputed boss of the whole territory. The workers of this colony are organized in the trade unions and when the manager of the company demanded their leaving it, a general strike was declared. The strikers, in spite of the terror practiced by very strong military detachments that had been concentrated in Bathurst, the capital of the colony and centre of the strike, did not surrender and the administration was obliged to recognise the workers' right for organization.

A very strong anti-imperialist movement exists in Haiti, the for-
mally independent Negro republic which is practically a colony of the USA, owing to the acute agrarian crisis and directed against the American puppet — President Borno, a revolt broke out in the country 1929. The United States sent large detachments of marine forces, airplanes, and cruisers to aid in suppressing the revolt. Though they succeeded, President Hoover thought it necessary to make some concessions. A special commission was created to investigate the causes of the revolt and at the same time the resignation of the President was promised. It is quite obvious that these concessions will not satisfy the workers of Haiti who will have to take up arms again and again until they at last throw down the yoke of imperialism.

In South Africa serious struggles of the workers have been conducted. In the United States the Negro workers are fast joining the Trade Union Unity League (the revolutionary Trade Union center for all the workers of the USA).

In all these places the Negro trade union reformist fakers have shown their true colours of betrayal. In South Africa Kadalie has betrayed the native workers by joining them up with the Amsterdam International — the chauvinist organization and tool of international capitalism. In the United States A. P. Randolph betrayed the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters into the jim-crow American Federation of Labor.

Comrades inclusion, capitalism is in a severe crisis. It cannot get out of it. The next steps are to organize the battles of the workers, we must here give consideration to all these questions. We must raise the signal of Revolt. We must point out how to organize to fight against class exploitation and race oppression, we must make it clear and declare that our struggles are a part of the international struggle against capitalism, we must organize our forces to this end, drawing from the experiences and lessons of our class brothers in China and India, in the capitalist countries and from the workers and peasants in the Soviet Union. We must give special attention to the question of the new imperialist war especially being designed against the USSR and the use that the capitalists intend to make of Negro soldiers in this war. Our conference must give active leadership and support to the struggles of the Negro workers throughout the world and to do this we must indicate practical organizational steps and tasks. Comrades if we do this we will have gone a long way towards justifying our efforts and towards winning the Negro workers for the international class struggle against capitalism. Our battle cry must be: Down with Imperialism!

PART III
REPORTS AND SPEECHES OF DELEGATES

T. S. Morton — Gold Coast Carpenters' Association Accra, West Africa

Mr. Chairman and comrades, the Gold Coast Carpenters' Association sends its greetings to this International Conference of Negro Workers. In the year 1928, matters affecting the status of Gold Coast Carpenters became so distressing that the men came together for the purpose of organizing a carpenters' union in the Gold Coast Colony.

On the 8th of January 1928, a meeting was held which unanimously resolved that the carpenters should form themselves into an organization to be known as the Gold Coast Carpenters' Association.
Communications were made with Carpenters of various Towns of the Gold Coast Colony and all approved of, and gave their entire support to the scheme.

The status of the Gold Coast Carpenter has been one of a subordinate, under a superior. The Governmental designation of the Gold Coast worker is: "African Technical Subordinate". The "technical subordinate" in the eye of the Government includes and consist of carpenters, masons, blacksmiths and painters engaged by both the Government, commercial organizations and private individuals.

The working hours as arranged by the Government, range from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. with a break of about one hour for breakfast — thus consisting of long and continuous work for about 9 hours a day.

In order to be punctual at work the worker has to leave his house about 5 a.m. and if it happens that the working place is located far away from Accra, he has to rise up earlier — sometimes being away from his house for a duration of nearly 10 or 12 a day hours.

The discharge of our work by working under the bare faced sun and rain, is so great that we decay prematurely and lose absolutely all physical energy and in many cases, we have had to live on the hospitality of our friends. This is the basic factor which led to the formation of the Gold Coast Carpenters' Association.

The long working hours fixed for us by the Government have been the source whereby the health of many workers has been broken with, the result of premature death. Most of our experienced workers have, in consequence, died.

For 9 or 12 hours' work per day, coupled with all the hardships and self-denials involved, we are paid meagre wages ranging from 2 shillings and 6 pence to 6 shillings per day. Headmen receive the 6 shillings rate. Apprentices are paid from 1 shilling and 6 pence a day for the first year, 2 shillings a day for the second year and 3 shillings a day for the third year.

We view with great dissatisfaction all the worries and weariness involved in our work, and the fact that the Government has regulated our wages to a standard such as this. Our dissatisfaction is intensified when we further consider that we are only entitled to pay exclusive of Sundays and Holidays and the fact that in the event of our being disabled or incapacitated or dead accidentally, no consideration whatsoever is given to us. As Government is always the moving spirit in matters of this nature, such wages have been universally adopted by all.

In order to overcome so grave a danger as I have above described to you, the Gold Coast Carpenters' Association asks on behalf of all the workers for the assistance of this Conference.

Most of us have had continuous employment in the Government service for periods extending over 20 years. This attitude of the Government towards us is raising the militancy of the rising generation.

In order to defeat the probability for an utter destruction of our work and to instil in the hearts of the rising generation a spirit of fight, the Gold Coast Carpenters' Association ask of this Conference such support as will arouse the workers and convince our youths of the advisability to espouse the cause of labour.

The high cost of living for ourselves and families cannot be met from our scanty wages. There is absolutely no margin left for us to meet an
im emergent need. When sickness attacks us or any member of our families, or death occurs amongst us, the medical and funeral expenses have always become a burden; and we are preforce driven to seek loans from money lenders who collect from our scanty wages for many months and years. These are matters which we entreat this Conference to consider.

The town rates on houses have been immeasurably increased. We have always suffered great hardship in meeting the payment of these rates. Our houses are frequently at the mercy of the auctioneer's hammer.

The workers of the Gold Coast of West Africa ask that this Conference interests itself in the conditions of the workers of our country and do all it can to help us fight to improve our conditions, especially with respect to the increase of wages and decrease the working hours, for old age pensions, and wages during holidays and sundays.

Comrade Akrong, Gold Coast Drivers' Association, Accra, Gold Coast, West Africa

Comrades,

The Gold Coast Drivers' Association was organized in December 1915 as a result of the repressive measures of the Government against the drivers of the Gold Coast. At that time there were about 8000 drivers most of whom were employed by the Government at a wage which made it impossible for them to provide themselves with the necessities of life. The founders of the organization immediately began an agitation among these workers for the purpose of organizing them. At the present time the organization has about a thousand members in the City of Accra, capital of the Gold Coast and 21 branches in Ashanti, Northern territory and Togoland with a total membership of about 7000. The Government have resorted to a policy of merciless persecution against the drivers in an attempt to break their spirit and to prevent any organizational measures being taken by them. They were subjected to extremely heavy fines upon the least provocation. In numerous occasions these fines amounted to more than two or three months salary, with the penalty of imprisonment if the driver was unable to pay the fine. In 1915 J. A. Akrong together with a group of other drivers decided to organize an association, in order to carry on a struggle against these tactics of the Government.

The answer of the Government was to reduce the wages of the drivers, who immediately were called out on strike by the organization. After two months of bitter struggle with the Government and the employers the drivers were forced back to work at a reduced wage. At the same time the Government imposes a yearly tax of 12 guinas upon each lorry owned by a native, and also established official parking stations where a tax of 9 pence per day was placed on each lorry. In this way the Government reduced the wages of the drivers to a mere nothing. Further 9 pence daily is charged for parking lorries.

These various oppressive measures were adopted by the Government in order to crush the militant spirit of the workers.

At the present time the general economic conditions of the country are so bad due to the tremendous decline in the price of cocoa that hundreds of drivers are unemployed because the planters are unable to transport their produce. Even those drivers who are still able to hold on to their job are so badly paid that they are unable to provide
themselves and their families with the most elementary needs. On the other hand the Government continues to increase direct taxation in order to provide funds for the revenue of the colonies which is largely used in paying tremendous salaries to Government officials. This policy of victimisation of the transport drivers is carried on chiefly through the police department. The black policemen are instructed by the white officers to arrest as many drivers as possible, in order that the magistrates may find them so that their wages — the policemen’s — could be guaranteed. It frequently happens that drivers are arrested two or three times in one month. These men are charged heavy fines, and if they are not able to pay the fines they are sent to prison, and on their release their permit is taken away from them. In this way hundreds of Gold Coast drivers are without any means of livelihood.

In view of these conditions, the Gold Coast Drivers' Union is glad to have this opportunity of bringing their problems before the International Conference of Negro Workers, because in so doing they will have an opportunity of letting the working class of other countries know something of the oppressive nature of the Gold Coast Government and the foreign capitalists.

We feel certain that the delegates here will not only sympathise with the workers of the Gold Coast, but will actively assist them in their struggle against their oppressors so that the conditions of the toiling masses of Negro workers in that country will be improved.

Com. Roberts, Food and Packing Workers' Union, Chicago, USA

Comrades, Chairman, Delegates,

I bring greetings from the Food and Packing Workers' Union to this Conference, that is to carry on and to further the struggle for the emancipation of Negro workers, who are the most oppressed and exploited workers.

In the Meat and Packing industry at Chicago (the largest in the world) the Negro forms at least 50% of the total number of the 25,000 workers. Eleven years ago they were brought there by the bosses of the industry, sanctioned if not aided by the American Federation of Labor to break a strike, and they (the bosses) succeeded; so the Negro has been there in that very important industry ever since.

The American Federation of Labor has not brought or offered him any real organization. But they had on many occasions deceived them, in one industry or another, for instance on the freight and docks of many rail roads. The AF. of L. would call a strike; the Negro trying to be true and loyal to the cause of labor would walked out with the white workers, and within a few days the AF. of L. would bring the white workers back to work and leave the Negro out in the cold; Negro waiters and waitresses have been served the same way by this notorious American Union.

The above conditions together with the propaganda of the bosses among the workers for share-holding, representatives on the Safety Committee, Company and Unions, etc, is causing starvation and misery.

This shows what a job and big task we have to organize the 15,000 or more Negros in the stock yards of Chicago.
Albert Green, South Africa

Comrades,

On behalf of the African Non-European Federation of Trade Unions, the Lekhota La Bafo (Poor Men's Organization) Basutoland and thousands of Negro workers who attended the meetings called for the purpose of electing delegates to this Conference and from the left wing of the African National Congress, I bring greetings.

Six other delegates were elected by various Negro organizations in South Africa, but the Hertzog Government fearing exposure of its brutalities towards the native people refused to grant them passports.

The Negro masses in South Africa have taken a keen interest in the preparatory work of this Conference. They are anxiously awaiting its outcome and deliberations and will certainly join whole heartedly in the international struggle of the Negro masses allied with the exploited and enslaved workers and peasants in all parts of the world against imperialism and slavery.

The population of South Africa consists of 6½ million Negroes and 1½ million of Europeans. From an economic point of view we may consider the population of South Africa 40 million Negroes. The main question is that of organizing the Negro workers, especially in the basic industries, mining and agriculture etc., where nearly a million Negro workers are employed. There are many difficulties in the organizational work, and all the organizations amongst Negro workers are still very weak. The I. C. U. which started in 1919 and grew into a tremendous organization with a membership of about 100,000 in 1927 has declined since then owing to its policy of reformism, and the exclusion of militants from the ranks of the union. Some time ago the Amsterdamers' sent Ballinger to reorganize the I. C. U. on "sane trade union lines". But there seems to be little scope for the reformists in South Africa, whose policy has lead to the total decline of the one-time powerful I. C. U. The position today is that the Independent I. C. U. led by Kadalie and the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa bossed over by Kadalie, are practically non existent and without any influence. Only the I. C. U. at Natal led by Champion has any following at all. After the expulsion of the militants of the I. C. U. 1927 the Federation of Non-European Trade Unions was started with a policy of militancy, and in the course of a short period it had about a dozen unions organized in different industries embracing on aggregate membership of about 10,000. The Federation is really the first trade union organization amongst Negro workers, as all the I. C. U.'s were more in the nature of political parties than trade unions. In South Africa the Negroes are probably more oppressed than in any other part of the world. They are treated as slaves every minute of the day, and are not allowed even one minute of freedom during day or night.

The African National Congress which came into existence just before the war saw the height of its influence in 1919 when it organized a campaign against the pass laws. The leaders, however, got frightened at the militancy of the workers in the course of the struggle and went over to the bosses. This resulted in demoralisation amongst the masses and a decline in the influence of the Congress. At its last annual conference in Bloemfontein April 1930 the reactionaries managed to capture the machine. But the followers of the congress which are found mostly in the Cape Province are definitely against the policy of the Reformists and a resolution by
Professor Thaele to exclude militants from Congress activities was defeated by 2,000 to 3,000 votes. The economic decline of the European workers is evident in every sphere of industrial life of the country, whilst from the other hand more Africans are being engaged not only on semi-skilled work but also on skilled work.

**Comrade Williams, R. R. workers' Union (USA)**

Comrades!

While no definite figures are available as to the number of Negro workers employed on the railroads in the United States, a conservative estimate is that there are around 150,000 to 200,000. For a number of years Negro workers have been employed on the railroads in the Southern states, but during the past ten years, particularly following the World War, with their migration from the Southern farming communities into the industries, their number has been greatly increased in the railroad industry and extended to roads further North and in the middle West.

The Negro workers are the lowest paid, have the poorest conditions, and are the most exploited of any class of railroad workers. They are everywhere discriminated against because of color, and given the worst jobs of common unskilled manual labor, and as a rule are prevented from rising above semi-skilled work. When they are made to perform more skilled work, which is frequently the case, they are paid the wages of unskilled workers. Throughout the South and on practically all roads in the North they are Jim-Crowed, compelled to use separate toilets, eating places, and otherwise socially segregated.

The Maintenance of way Department employs a larger number of Negro workers than any other branch of railroad service. Many roads in the South employ Negro workers almost exclusively as section laborers and other maintenance of way workers. The more skilled and higher paid jobs in this department are given to white workers, as well as all jobs as foremen, minor section gang bosses, etc.

In the last ten years thousands of Negro workers have entered the railroad shops, roundhouses, and shop yards, employed principally as semi-skilled tradesmen, mechanics' helpers, and performing heavy common labor. They are seldom permitted to enter the shops as apprentices for the purpose of learning a trade, and when they do acquire a certain amount of skill and perform this class of work they are not promoted to mechanics, nor do they receive mechanic's pay.

Negro workers are employed as locomotive firemen and brakemen on both freight and passenger trains, and as switchmen and switch-tenders in the yards. The Negro workers performing this class of work are confined entirely to the railroads in the South.

Large numbers of Negro workers, both men and women, are employed in the cleaning of passenger cars.

There is also a considerable number of Negro workers employed as freight and express handlers, truckers, loading and unloading freight and express.

In the railroad stations practically all over the country Negro workers are employed as porters, handling baggage and doing porter work around the stations.

On the Pullman sleeping cars and on the dining cars Negro workers are exclusively employed as porters, maids, and cooks and waiters. It is
estimated that there are about 12,000 Pullman porters and maids. As cooks and waiters there are a much smaller number.

The rates of wages paid Negro workers in the various departments are from 32 cents to 35 cents per hour.

**Station Porters** receive around $50 per month in wages and depend upon tips from passengers.

Pullman porters receive from $65 to $78 per month. With tips received from passengers their average monthly wage is from $100 to $125 per month. The wages of dining car cooks and waiters is approximately the same.

The 8-hour day prevails in all departments, except in sleeping and dining car service who work from 250 to 300 hours per month, and sometimes are on runs for 4 and 6 days.

The sleeping car porters are compelled to work excessively long hours, depending upon the length of their runs.

The policy of the railroad companies and the leaders of the American Federation of Labor is to keep the Negro and white workers divided, ill feeling among them, and working against each other. All A. F. of L. unions on the railroads bar Negro workers, with the exception of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Waymen. While this union takes in Negro workers, a comparatively few have been actually brought in, and these, in most instances, are segregated into Jim-Crow locals. The Negro locomotive firemen have in recent years organized a union of their own which has a membership in the neighborhood of 5,000. The station porters have an organization known as the Red Caps. This is largely a social club.

The most important union of Negro railroad workers is the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. A campaign to organize the Pullman porters was begun in 1925 by A. Philip Randolph and other reformist leaders among the Negro workers. In 1928 it was claimed that a majority of the 12,000 porters and maids were organized into the Brotherhood. A strike vote was taken with the membership voting overwhelmingly in favor of a strike to compel recognition of the organization, wage increase, shorter hours, improvement of working conditions, and the abolition of the tipping system. The strike was betrayed by Randolph and President Green of the A. F. of L. calling it off at the last moment. Since then disintegration of the Brotherhood has taken place and at the present time a bare skeleton of the organization exists in a few of the larger railroad terminals.

The organization when launched in 1925 had a more or less militant policy, but during the past few years Randolph and the other reformist Negro leaders have adopted a policy of class-collaboration in line with that of the A. F. of L. while headquarters are maintained in Chicago and New York, at the present time the organization shows very little life and practically no organization work is being carried on.

While some slight inroads have been made since the Cleveland Trade Union Unity League Convention last September into the ranks of the Negro railroad workers to draw them into the National Railroad Industrial League, the actual organization established among them is still very weak. The organization of this league is a concrete example of the possibilities of drawing the Negro workers into the railroad league when a determined effort is made to do so. Being the most exploited, the first to feel the pressure of the speedup, layoffs, and wage cuts, the Negro railroad workers are rapidly becoming radicalized, show a willingness to fight, and are looking for leadership in their struggle for better conditions.