

NEGRO FREEDOM: A COMMENT

By Mort Scheer

1963 is the 100th year of the Emancipation Proclamation. February is known as Brotherhood Month and includes Negro History Week. Rochester is the city where Frederick Douglass edited his famous abolitionist newspaper, North Star, and was a famous stop on the freedom train of the Underground Railroad.

Yet in Rochester, in February, in 1963, the Negro people are engaged in bitter struggle for equality.

At a mass meeting on February 17th, representatives of the Black Muslims and the Rochester Branch of the NAACP called for a united front to defend the civil rights of Rochester Negroes. More than 600 people came to protest the recent wave of police brutality directed at Rochester Negroes. Among the recent cases of police violence and assault were:

*The brutal beating of Rufus Fairwell, a service station worker, while he was in jail. He had been falsely charged with assaulting two cops. So crude was the frameup that the grand jury was forced to clear him of all charges. He is now suing the city for \$125,000 for the false arrest and injuries he received in jail.

*The attack on A. C. White, a foundry worker. He was arrested on a charge of driving while intoxicated and was so badly beaten up after his arrest that he had to be taken to Strong Memorial Hospital. The four cops responsible for the assault were suspended without pay pending an investigation. However, WKBW Radio reported on February 21 that they had been reinstated.

*The raid by Rochester police who broke into a Black Muslim religious meeting on January 6th. Subsequently 13 Muslims were arrested for having resisted the illegal police attack on their meeting. While in jail, the militant and youthful Muslims (almost all of the thir-
(Comments and criticism of this article and/or the Muslim Movement are invited from readers - Ed.)

teen are between the ages of 19 to 26) conducted an eight day fast as a form of protest against their unjust arrest. After the eighth day they were released on \$500 bail each which was provided by Elijah Muhammed, national leader of the Muslims, when he became concerned for the health of the 13 young men.

The theme of the mass meeting was sounded by Reverend Wendell Phillips, President of the Rochester NAACP, where he called upon Negro groups to subordinate their differences and cooperate. "It's high time we unite", he said. Dr. Walter Cooper, chairman of the local community affairs committee of NAACP declared that "the community is at the crossroads in race relations." He said that the local NAACP has not been successful in achieving social justice through traditional methods and called upon "responsible" representatives of the white majority "to act instead of talk."

And how have some of these "responsible" white leaders reacted to the call "for deeds...not platitudes?"

Addressing the annual breakfast of the Rochester and Monroe County Brotherhood Week Committee, the Vice-President of the National Conference of Christian and Jews, Dr. James E. Eagan said, "In a sense the Black Muslims and the White Citizen Councils are the same in philosophy and methods. We know that you don't change attitudes by either moral exhortations or by hurling accusations from opposite sides of the street. You do it by using methods of educational persuasion and by bringing together all parties and intelligent dialogue.

"We know," Dr. Eagan continued, "that new techniques have to be used with key groups of leaders who

are willing to use these techniques in the solution of community conflicts without resort to scapegoating of exaggerated charges. The National Council of Christians and Jews tries to do this by working with leaders of PTAs, community organizations, schools and colleges, police and mass media."

Then Dr. Eagan presented two Annual Brotherhood Awards to two other "responsible" white leaders. Members of this Brotherhood Committee included the District Attorney, the Sheriff, the Chief of Police, a State Supreme Court Justice, a State Commissioner of Human Rights, and other "responsible" white leaders.

They are "responsible" all right. Responsible for the jailings, the frameups, the brutal beatings, and the continued'sweet talk' to cover up their crimes. They are for Brotherhood, they say. They are opposed to the KKK and White Citizen Councils, they say. But what do they do at their meetings? They attack the Black Muslims! They equate the violence of the oppressors with the self-defense of the oppressed! Don't exaggerate, they say. Don't hurl accusations, they say. Be patient they say. For them 300 years of slave and Jim Crow oppression isn't too long. What's needed, they advise, are new techniques of educational persuasion so that in another 100 years they can celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation with more Brotherhood Meetings and Awards.

We've had enough of these "responsible" white leaders; enough of their hypocritical deceit, enough of their "respectability" enough of their false advice!

THE MUSLIMS

At the mass meeting, Malcom X, minister of Mosque No. 7, and a national Muslim spokesman, together with Robert X, minister of the Buffalo Mosque, sounded the call that received the heaviest applause of the evening. He said: "My people have caught hell long enough. You don't get anything by being polite... the only time you get something is when you let the man know you are fed up!"

The rapidly growing Muslim movement, officially estimated to be between 100,000 to 250,000 strong, has become one of the most significant developments in recent history. Consider the following features of the movement: 1. The mass base of the movement is working class and youth. 2. They militantly oppose all forms of gradualism and tokenism. 3. They champion the dignity and history of the Negro people and militantly attack all forms of white supremacy. 4. They identify their struggle with the oppressed peoples throughout the world and expose Kennedy's hypocritical cold war slogans of defending freedom from the threat of communism. 5. They urge a united front of all Negroes regardless of differences. 6. They are subjected to some of the most brutal attacks by the white ruling class.

Progressive workers should vigorously defend the Muslims from the brutal attacks upon them.

Demands echo across the country - "It's high time to unite" - "Traditional methods to achieve justice are not successful" - "Let the man know we are fed up."

While the movement is developing new heights of militancy and unity, the fact is that the brutal oppression and exploitation of the mass of the Negro people contin-

The Cold Facts of 1½ Million Jobless

The gravity of mounting unemployment in the United States was graphically described by President Kennedy as the country's No. 1 economic problem in his special manpower report to Congress.

Unemployment, said the President, represents a loss to the American people of between \$30 billion and \$40 billion a year in loss of additional goods and services.

So great, however, is unemployment among Negroes, and so desperate their economic plight, that losses to them due to joblessness cannot be measured in dollars and cents. With automation snatching from them even the unskilled and semi-skilled jobs left them as crumbs by a hostile society, theirs is now a struggle against death itself.

In its February report, the U.S. Department of Labor showed a rise in national unemployment from 5.8% in January to 6.1% in February.

January figures showed non-whites (Negroes) as 12.7% unemployed and whites 5.9% unemployed. This meant that there were nearly 1½ jobless Negroes during January.

February figures, however, were even more ominous, with unemployed Negroes reliably reported as reaching 15.3%.

ues unabated. Even after a hundred years, has there been any real change in the second class status for the mass of the American Negro? NO! The rate of Negro unemployment is more than double that of whites. The income of a Negro family averages \$2,000 less than that of a white family. Jim Crow ghettos and segregated schools remain essentially intact, North and South. Police brutality has gotten worse. The lynchers and murderers of Emmitt Till and Mack Parker are still free. The KKK and the White Citizens Councils are still free to commit their crimes.

After a hundred years how dare anyone speak of the progress that has been made? It's high time to draw the conclusion that efforts (however militant and united) to reform the capitalist system to eliminate its Jim Crow heart have proven completely impotent. Every reform in the Jim Crow system can be compared to the slave escapes on the Underground Railroad. Each one was heroic; each was to be welcomed and supported, but it did not end the system of slavery. The system of slavery was smashed only when the power of the slave owners was smashed.

To smash forever the monstrous racial system, the power of the modern slave masters must be smashed. They are that small class of white rulers of the economy who control the local, state and federal governments and who make more than \$5 billion a year in extra profits from their extra exploitation of the Negro people. They are the main enemy of the Negro people, the enemy of all working people.

How do they get away with it year after year? To defeat the enemy, it is necessary to understand the tactics they employ to perpetuate their system.

1. They have woven into the very fabric of the American Way of Life the lie of white supremacy to justify the oppression of Negroes as "inferiors" and to divide Negro and white workers in order to better exploit both.

2. They have skillfully developed a division of labor amongst themselves, where one wing (the Dixiecrats)

openly oppose Negro equality while the other wing (the liberal Kennedys and Rockefellers) pose as friends of Negro equality. In that way they contain the struggle in safe, gradualist channels by getting the mass of the people to support their liberal wing as opposed to their Dixiecrat wing.

3. When they are put under pressure, they grant concessions on the unessential (such as token integration or introduce civil rights legislation that is never enforced). This gives the illusion that great social progress is being made while the mass of the people remain as oppressed as ever.

4. When capable Negro reform leaders emerge, they honor and flatter them, appoint them into political positions of no real authority, and integrate them into their state apparatus. This gives the illusion that great political progress is being made while the mass of the people remain oppressed as ever and without any political power.

5. Their main tactic remains intimidation and terror-police brutality, mass raids and arrests, frameups, legal and illegal lynchings, KKK and White Citizen Council violence, economic threats against the little you now get, such as the threat of being thrown off welfare.

6. Finally, they strive to isolate revolutionary leaders from the masses by red-baiting and anti-communist hysteria, and if this doesn't succeed to jail them or drive them into exile (Robert Williams).

The entire state apparatus, the economic and educational institutions, the mass media of communications are all controlled by the white ruling class and used by them to perpetuate their profitable Jim Crow capitalist system.

In our statement on Hazard (Feb. P. L. Vol. 2 No. 2). Progressive Labor said: "The Kentucky miners have made their choice. They have started the historic sweep to determine their own destiny. They have swept aside the phony union leaders. They have no illusions that the Federal Government gives a damn about them. They have been met by terror, and they have armed in self-defense. They will not turn the other cheek to be kicked in the face again."

The working class can unite and will unite because our life experience teaches us that we must unite if we are to survive. White workers too say "We are fed-up with this system of unemployment and poverty for us while the Rockefellers and Kennedys make billions."

But it is understandable that the Negro worker should be suspicious of his white brother. It is understandable that the Negro worker should reply to this call for unity with, "I've heard that before, Charlie, and every time there's been 'unity' in the trade unions it's been the unity of the white workers on top and the black workers on the bottom." It is more than understandable. It is healthy.

It is, in the first place, up to the white workers and their real leaders to wage a real fight against the bosses and the phony and racist trade union leaders like Dubinsky. It is up to the white workers first to organize a sharp struggle, a struggle to the death against the bosses, before they can expect the black workers to unite. And if white workers are slow to struggle militantly, Negro workers will be slow to unite with them. But Negro workers will not, and should not, wait for their white brothers to get wise before they (the black

A Strategy for Victory

The main direction for abolishing Jim Crow oppression in the U. S. must be based on the revolutionary objective of smashing the political power of the white ruling class and abolishing the capitalist system which is the source of the oppression. Only a united working class led by revolutionary leadership can have the strength and will to achieve such a revolutionary objective. Therefore the development of a revolutionary socialist movement within the working class and Negro freedom movement is of prime importance.

To achieve such a revolutionary objective, a strategy for victory must be developed. Such a strategy should be based on the following considerations:

1. The main demands that now dominate the Negro freedom movement reflect the demands of the middle class and not the workers and farmers who constitute the overwhelming mass and most oppressed section of the Negro people. The first task is to develop a program that will reflect their demands which essentially evolve around the questions of jobs, land, and social justice.

2. All illusions and reliance on the white ruling class must be smashed. The hypocritical pretensions of the liberal Kennedys and Rockefellers as friends of Negro freedom, together with their white supremacist labor flunkies and their Uncle Tom supporters must be exposed again and again.

3. The basic aim of all mass struggles around immediate programmatic demands must be the conscious revolutionary development of the masses and the organization of a revolutionary vanguard.

4. Finally, a strategy for victory must be based on the understanding that state power can only be won by a united working class leading an alliance of all forces opposed to the white ruling class.

The Muslim demand for a separate state can never be achieved within the frame of the U. S. system of Jim Crow capitalism, and in this regard it should be understood as a revolutionary demand. It's unthinkable that the white ruling class would voluntarily give up a large tract of its land, natural resources, and factories and turn them over to the Negro people. Self-determination for oppressed peoples within a country can only be achieved by smashing the state power of the oppressors. If a significant section of the Negro people still want a separate state, after the workers, Negro and white, have established their own state power, have outlawed all Jim Crow, and run the economy for the general welfare, then a socialist state must guarantee this basic right of oppressed peoples for self-determination, including the right to a separate state.

Can Negro workers trust white workers any more than they can trust the white bosses? Should white workers fight for the rights of Negroes?

Despite the fact that the mass of white workers are still polluted with the ruling class lies about white supremacy which must be continuously fought, in order to sustain their own lives as workers and their families, they too have to fight the white bosses profit system of living off their backs. Through these bitter struggles white workers learn that they can't win if they are not united. And they learn they can't unite if some are going to discriminate against others because of race, creed, color, or sex.