

OUR PROBLEMS

Urgent Questions of the Work of the C.P. of South Africa.

By J o h n s.

(Continued.)

The United Front of White and Black Workers, Work in the Trade Unions, and the Work of the Trade Unions.

While properly fighting against chauvinist prejudices on the part of a certain section of the white workers, in practice we have frequently replaced the struggle against white chauvinism by a refusal of the united front of white and black workers in places where there existed the conditions for a joint attack on the common enemy—the capitalists. Among the native and white workers, there is a striving towards unity. The workers spontaneously understand that the conditions of victory over capitalism by the workers exist only in the united front of white and native workers. In practice we have frequently given up this slogan to the traitors Zacks and such like, who owing to our mistakes and sectarianism, can still deceive the white and native workers, stating that they are for the united front. In those instances where we have attempted to apply the united front tactic, such as in the Garment Workers strike and the Chemical workers strike in Johannesburg we have completely distorted the line of the R.I.L.U. by establishing a united front from above with the reformist leaders. Our chief mistakes here arose from the narrow understanding of the line for the independence of our trade unions, the line for independently leading the economic struggle and organising trade unions. The difference between us and the opportunists who betray and hand over the leadership of the struggle to clear and open supporters of the capitalists—the yellow trade unions—consists of the fact that we independently try to carry on the struggle. In practice, the line for independent trade unions and independently leading the struggle had led to complete rejection of oppositional work in the trade unions. And the majority of organised workers are still under the leadership of the reformists. But it is not only a matter of organised workers. We cannot organise and lead the struggle of the unorganised workers without carrying on an oppositional struggle in the trade unions, without linking up with and helping those workers who are striving to struggle against capitalist exploitation.

“Millions of workers in Britain, France and Germany for the first time are passing from complete lack of organisation to the elementary, lowest, simplest and easiest available form of organisation (for those who are still penetrated through and through with bourgeois-democratic prejudices), namely the trade unions” wrote **Lenin**. By refusing to fight in the trade unions, we in South Africa have objectively given over to the Zacks, etc., the possibility of leading the masses of unorganised workers who are rising for the first time from political unconsciousness and lack of organisation to the elementary and most available struggle and form of organisation.

A narrow line on independence isolated our trade unions from the organised workers and our Party from the masses.

Our trade unions considered that their chief and **only** action was to carry on strikes. And the Communists say “we must only carry on strikes and we do not know any other trade union activity”. But this has often been found to be only an appeal. But in fact they were not able to prepare any big strikes or assume the leadership of the many spontaneous strikes that have taken place.

(To be concluded.)