

On the Negro Question

(From a Speech Delivered at the Seventh
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The Communists support nationalist movements when they fulfill two conditions. First when they weaken the power of imperialism, and certainly we must realize that the struggle of the Negro masses in the South against the white bourgeoisie will be a factor in weakening the power of the bourgeoisie. Secondly, when in the struggles of this character we can draw in the vast sections of the oppressed nationality. It must be apparent, after Comrade Hathaway's report that around this slogan there exists the possibility of making a united front with wider populations of Negro sections in this country. And for these two reasons, comrades, our answer must be, "Yes, we will support this struggle of the Negro masses. Yes, we will support this nationalist movement."

With this whole question of self-determination, the question of our Election Campaign assumes the greatest importance, for here we have an opportunity to bring before the workers in the South in a more or less concrete form the fact that we are putting into practice what we say when we fight for full social and political equality and that we support the demand of the Negro workers for self-determination. In our Election Campaign,

we will be able to reach the widest possible masses, provided we have the forces and are properly organized.

Just one final point in regard to the question raised by Comrade Patterson that seems to agitate many comrades, that there is a contradiction in terms between the demand for self-determination and between class solidarity of Negro workers and white workers. Comrade Lenin, in his speech on this question at the Party conference in Russia in 1917, dealt with this in his reply to the comrades who raised this question very thoroughly, in which he said that you cannot have class solidarity until you have a free and fraternal feeling among the workers. It is necessary to remove all restrictive bonds insofar as these bonds prevent nationalities from working out their own destiny.

Not on the basis of oppression can we unite the Negro workers with white workers, but only on the basis of the fight for the fullest right of the Negroes to self-determination can we draw them into one united front of solidarity with white workers, and, therefore, there is no contradiction of terms, and, therefore, our struggle for the right of the Negro masses for self-determination is a part of our struggle to unify the ranks of the working class to draw them into one solid front of the workers against the capitalist class.